

MAKING A CHILD'S EDUCATION A PRIORITY: A CASE STUDY OF FACTORS  
INFLUENCING THE LACK OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN A GEORGIA  
PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL

by

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## Abstract

Parental involvement in public schools is a much debated topic in the United States. Many school systems face the difficulty of encouraging parents to participate in their children's education. Educators are aware of what it takes for students to be academically successful; yet, parents must embrace a similar notion so they may be able to assist in their children's academic endeavors. The purpose of this study was to assess the perceptions of teachers and parents regarding the lack of parental involvement in a suburban high school. The study attempted to determine the differences in the perceptions of parents and teachers across all four-grade levels ninth through twelfth, as it related to parental involvement in the school's setting as well as differences between the perceptions of actively involved parents compared to parents who are not actively involved in their child's education. The researcher collected information from a population of 95 teachers and 130 parents. This was a case study that utilized mixed methodology to investigate the research questions. The following two modified surveys were used to conduct the study: *High School and Family Partnerships: Parent Survey* and *High School and Family Partnerships: Teacher Survey*. The first survey was designed to gather data regarding parents' perceptions regarding parental involvement in the school, parental involvement practices, barriers with parental involvement and family demographics. The second survey was designed to gather data regarding the teachers' perceptions of the importance of family involvement, present practices of involvement by the teacher and by the school, estimates of parents' involvement and responsibilities, teaching experiences, personal and school demographics. Additionally, follow-up interview questions were derived from the survey instrument and were used to clarify

information collected from the survey instrument. Descriptive statistics were computed to examine the relationship between parental involvement perceptions, parental involvement practices and parental involvement barriers. The results indicated that the perceptions of parents and teachers regarding barriers to parental involvement were significantly different. Additionally, there was a positive correlation between the parent perceptions of parental involvement and parental involvement practices. Also, the parents' experiences were diverse regarding school related parental involvement practices.

## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. First, I am eternally grateful to my husband and best friend, William Mac Jackson II for his love, commitment, patience, support, guidance, comfort and understanding throughout my educational endeavors. When I was pessimistic, he uplifted me and kept me focused on the end goal of reaching the pinnacle of my education. When I was mentally exhausted, he provided vacations or my favorite desserts.

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My father, Smith Sinclair Jr. who consistently reassured me that everything was going to be just fine.

My brother, JuReginald Sinclair who emailed me daily devotionals that kept my spirits high and jokes that provided me with much needed laughter.

My sister-in-law, Shateesa Sinclair who planned family getaways that provided me with relaxation and motivation that I needed when it seemed that stress would overtake me.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

### Introduction to the Problem

Students are the primary source to tomorrow's future; therefore, it is imperative that they are academically prepared to lead this society. As educators continuously prepare students for the rigorous expectations of society, it is pertinent that parents assist in their child's education to produce "stable and productive" adults (Wheeler, 1992, p. 28). Thus, parental involvement is a necessity in all facets of education; yet, it is extremely vital for adolescents (Annunziata, Hogue, Faw, & Liddle, 2006).

The period of adolescence is one of numerous challenges that require various adjustments and the ability to make logical decisions. When adolescents begin to realize that they have to start making important decisions regarding family, peers, and school; they quickly learn that the decision-making process is not as simple as they anticipated. When parents allow adolescents to make their own decisions, many of them soon discover that they are more prone to engage in potential conflicts with their children because of some bad decisions (Dryfoos, 1990). Lerner and Galambos (1998) assert that for both parents and adolescents, this is a time of excitement, bewilderment, anxiety, happiness, discovery, confusion, troubles and breaks with the past and links to the future.

When adolescents enter middle school, they are excited about the thought of not being in the elementary school environment. When students transition from middle school to high school, they begin to experience hormonal, psychological and social

changes. Because of the rapid changes, some students are easily influenced by their peers and as a result may make bad decisions that can lead to negative consequences (Dryfoos, 1990). Many adolescents learn to make the right decisions at this stage in life; yet, some are still easily influenced by their peers that can lead to their inability to focus on the more important aspects of school and the purpose for being there (Brooks-Gunn & Petersen, 1983; Lerner & Foch, 1987; Petersen, 1988).

Because of the previously mentioned difficulties that are faced during this phase of life, challenges are bound to exist and these young individuals need support and guidance to help them prepare for their future (Beatty & Chalk, 2006; Galambos & Almeida, 1992). Hara (1998) asserts that parental involvement is the primary vehicle by which to raise academic achievement amongst adolescents. Thus, if students are expected to be academically successful and positively contribute to society, it is pertinent that educators and parents provide support to them and become more involved in their academic endeavors (Galambos & Almeida, 1992).

### Background of the Study

American students are continuously falling behind academically (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). It is no secret that in recent years, test scores are slowly declining. According to Bronfenbrenner, McClelland, Wethington, Moen, and Ceci (1996), the United States children's achievement test scores in math and science are significantly lower than those children in European and Asian countries. For example, in a 2003 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) report, the mathematics literacy scores for 15-year olds in the U.S. averaged 483 on a scale of 0 to 1,000 with an

average of 500 scale points (NCES, 2006). The report concluded that students in 15 out of 20 countries outperformed students in the U.S. (NCES, 2006).

Various research studies have directly linked parental involvement to the academic achievement of students (Marzano, 2003; Christian, Morrison & Bryant, 1998; Mau, 1997; McBride & Lin, 1996; Muller, 1998; Singh, Bickley, Trivette, Keith, Keith and Anderson, 1995). Many of the studies that have been conducted focus directly on parental involvement in the elementary school setting and some conclude that it is more effective in this setting (Singh et al., 1995). For example, some studies conclude that the impact of parental involvement significantly contributes to mathematics achievement (Crane, 1996; Muller, 1998; Peressini, 1998; Shaver & Walls, 1998), reading achievement (Jeynes, 2001; Shaver & Walls, 1998) and in various other subjects (Jeynes, 2001; Zdzinski, 1996). Since parental involvement is an integral part of student achievement, it is imperative that additional studies are conducted and parental involvement programs are implemented in the high school setting.

Previous legislation made various attempts to improve the quality of education in American schools. In 2004, According to the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. DOE) a tremendous amount of attention was geared towards improving education in America through Goals 2000: Educate America Act. One of the requirements of this legislation was that it include strategies for how the state educational agency would involve parents and the community in planning, designing and implementing the state improvement plan (Goals 2000: Educate America Act, Title III, Sec. 306).

Currently, the new provisions of No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) require that parents are an important insight into their children's education which includes the



professional qualifications of their teachers and the quality of the schools they attend. The purpose is to ensure that parents will have what they need in order to make the best decisions for their children, become more involved in making decisions with their children's schools and assist the schools in developing effective and successful academic programs. In order for states and local education agencies to best implement the new provisions, the U.S. Department of Education provides guidance that addresses the following: (a) general issues related to parental involvement, (b) the responsibilities of state educational agencies (SEA), (c) the responsibilities of local educational agencies (LEA), (d) the responsibilities of schools and (e) the responsibilities of local educational agencies and schools to build parents' capacity for becoming involved in improving their child's academic achievement (U.S. DOE, 2004).

Overall, one of the goals of NCLB is to increase student achievement amongst all students (U.S. DOE, 2004). This goal has become increasingly difficult with the stringent requirements of this legislation. In an effort to increase student achievement parents and students have to engage in the decision-making process and parents have to become actively involved in their children's education, which is an essential ingredient to student success (Hara, 1998) and is one of the requirements of NCLB.

### Statement of the Problem

A tremendous amount of research has been done regarding parental involvement in elementary schools; however, a limited amount has been done that focuses on parental involvement in high schools. Furthermore, parental involvement is not only needed in the elementary school setting, but is especially needed during the secondary stages of

education. As Jeynes (2007) asserts, the “influence of parental involvement overall is significant for secondary school children” (p. 82). Jeynes (2007) and Hara (1998) conclude that the key to improving children’s academic achievement is an increase in parental involvement. Thus, in order to ensure that parental involvement is effectively promoted in public high schools, it is necessary for educational leaders to assess parents’ and teachers’ perceptions of parental involvement. It is not known why parents are not more actively involved at the high school level, what the possible deterrents are, or what may encourage improved levels of involvement.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess the perceptions of teachers and parents regarding the lack of parental involvement in a suburban high school and to present information to assist educators in developing and maintaining ongoing relationships with parents and encouraging them to remain involved throughout the high school years. The study will attempt to determine the differences in the perceptions of parents and teachers across all four-grade levels ninth through twelfth, as it relates to parental involvement in the school’s setting as well as differences between the perceptions of actively involved parents compared to parents who are not actively involved in their child’s education.

### Rationale

Stakeholders are recognizing the importance of parental involvement in education. A plethora of research studies have determined that parental involvement is a contributing factor to student achievement and more schools are embracing this premise.

Moreover, the need for parental involvement is increasing as schools continue to operate in the age of accountability. Thus, it is critical to focus on the perceptions of parental involvement through teachers and parents especially in the high school setting where there is an increase in autonomy. The study will seek to determine if previous held beliefs that parental involvement contributes to student achievement is consistent with the beliefs of teachers and parents at a local high school.

### Research Questions

The following research questions will be used to investigate the problem:

1. What are the perceived barriers, if any, that teachers identify regarding the lack of parental involvement?
2. What are the perceived barriers, if any, that parents identify regarding the lack of parental involvement?
3. What are the perceptions of parents who actively participate in their child's educational studies and school as compared to parents who do not actively participate in their child's educational studies and school?
4. What are the school factors that parents identify that may encourage parental involvement?

### Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are made prior to conducting the study:

1. Parental involvement is highly encouraged in this school.
2. Teachers actively focus on clearly communicating with parents so they may stay abreast of their child's academic status.
3. Parents actively focus on clearly communicating with teachers.

4. There are some barriers that may prevent parents from being proactive in their child's education.
5. Teachers and parents believe that students are better able to perform when their parents are involved in the school.

### Significance of the Study

This study will examine the perceptions of parents and teachers of ninth through twelfth-grade students regarding parental involvement. Because various research studies outlined in the literature review indicate that there is a decrease in parental involvement between elementary and high school, this study will assist educators with a greater understanding as to why there is a decline. In addition, the study will present information to assist educators in developing and maintaining an ongoing relationship with parents to encourage them to remain involved throughout the high school years. Thereby, as parents become more involved and students become academically successful, the students will be better prepared for challenges that will allow them to contribute positively to society. Additionally, teachers and parents will be able to utilize this information to assist them in practicing effective communication skills. Also, the school may benefit from this study by utilizing the data to create an effective parental involvement program.

### Definition of Terms

The most important terms that were used in this study are as follows:

*Academic achievement.* In this study, academic achievement is the act of students accomplishing high levels of achievement academically (Galambos & Almeida, 1992).

*Communication.* The extent to which parents and their children communicated about school activities and reported a high level of communication overall (Jeynes, 2007).

*Local education agency.* In this study, a local education agency is a local board of education or public facility that may legally function to serve public elementary and secondary schools (U.S. DOE, 2004).

*Parent.* Refers to an older individual who takes a special interest and helps a child develop and understand life values and to build self-confidence (Wheeler, 1992).

*Parental involvement.* Parental participation in the educational processes and experiences of their children (Jeynes, 2007). Involvement consists of four components: parental expectations, parental interests, parental involvement in schools, and family community (Hoge, Smit, & Crist, 1997).

*Perception.* In this study, a perception is the attitude to which the parents and teachers will view parental involvement in the school's setting (Hara, 1998).

*State education agency.* In this study, a state education agency is a state board or public agency that legally serves all public school institutions in a state and provides information, resources and technical assistance on educational matters to the school and the residents (U.S. DOE, 2004).

### Assumptions

The following assumptions are made prior to the study being conducted:

1. Parents and teachers will respond honestly and accurately to survey questions.

2. The parents and teachers who will participate in the study will only serve as a sample of the school's population.
3. The teachers who will be participating in the study are colleagues of the researcher.
4. The parents who will be participating in the study are not directly connected to the researcher and their children are not current or previous students of the researcher.

### Limitations

The following limitations are applicable to this study:

1. Since the study will focus on a small sample, it may be difficult to apply the influence of parental involvement to the general population of students.
2. The study will focus on a specific group of parents and teachers who may be involved in different situations and therefore may not be able to correctly identify which aspects of parental involvement can apply to others who are involved with the same school and who may have different experiences.
3. The study will be conducted during the spring and summer of the 2007-2008 school year and is not applicable to previous or subsequent parents or teachers.
4. Parents and teachers may not give honest and accurate responses because the researcher is employed at the school.

### Nature of the Study

In order to answer the research questions listed above, a case study will be conducted using a mixed methodology approach. Many research studies outlined in the literature review indicate that parental involvement is a predictor for academic success of

students; research will be conducted to examine the perceptions of parents and teachers regarding the level of parental involvement in a suburban public high school.

A case study approaching utilizing mixed methodology will be conducted. This will include a survey of parents and teachers using a modified version of a Likert-type scale developed by Epstein, Connors-Tadros, and Salinas (1993). Additionally, the research will include individual interviews of seven parents and five teachers and a document analysis of documents such as newsletters, calendars and newspapers that are mailed home to parents.

### Organization of the Remainder of the Study

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the problem, background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, rationale for the study, research questions, hypotheses, nature of the study, significance of the study, definition of terms, assumptions, and limitations.

Chapter 2 will consists of a substantial review of literature as it relates to parental involvement in education. It will include a brief introduction, definition of parental involvement, the effects of parental involvement on academic achievement, parental involvement during the transition to high school, parental involvement models, parents' perspectives of barriers contributing to the lack of parental involvement, other perspectives of barriers contributing to the lack of parental involvement, factors influencing the levels of parental involvement, gender differences in parental involvement, differences in ethnicity and parental involvement, family structure and

student success, review of parental involvement programs, models to improve parent-teacher relationships and school strategies to increase parental involvement.

Chapter 3 will refer to the research methodology that will be utilized to conduct the study. In addition, it will include a brief introduction, a description of the research design, sample, data collection and analysis, ethical issues and limitations of the study.

Chapter 4 will give a summary and analyze the data collected. In addition, the results and findings of the study will be included that addresses the research questions.

Chapter 5 will provide a summary of the findings in addition to the results. This chapter will include the conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research regarding the area of parental involvement.



## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Parental involvement in a child's education is one of the most important keys to effective schools and student achievement (Hawley & Rosenholtz, 1983). Henderson (1987) conducted a study in which she concluded that "parental involvement is associated with higher levels of student performance, lower dropout rates, better motivation and self-esteem, improved behavior, and more parent and community support of the schools" (p. 29). Many of the previous factors are especially relevant for secondary school students simply because this is the stage in which they interact more with their peers and less with family members (Lerner & Galambos, 1998). According to Henderson (1987), parental involvement is the most effective if it is consistent and organized and it starts in early childhood and continues through high school.

Lerner and Galambos (1998) assert that parents allow more autonomy as students progress through school which results in students taking control over their own education. Thus, this presents additional challenges to the schools in the era of accountability. The purpose of this study is to assess the perceptions of teachers and parents regarding the lack of parental involvement in a suburban high school and to present information to assist educators in developing and maintaining ongoing relationships with parents and encouraging them to remain involved throughout the high school years.

The first section of this chapter will discuss the definition of parent and parental involvement and how developing a clear understanding of the meaning of each word can make a difference in the academic success of children. Additionally, the effects that parental involvement has on academic success, parent involvement during the transition to high school, and parental involvement models will be discussed. The second section of this chapter will discuss the barriers that contribute to the lack of parental involvement based on parents' perspectives as well as other factors that may contribute to the lack of parental involvement. Additionally, the factors influencing the levels of parental involvement, gender difference in parental involvement, differences in ethnicity and parental involvement and the family structure and student success will be reviewed. The end of this chapter will give an overview of some parental involvement programs, models to improve parent-teacher relationships and suggested strategies that schools may utilize to increase parental involvement.

### Definition of Parental Involvement

In order to understand parental involvement, it is important to decipher the meaning of *parent*. Wheeler (1992) asserts that a "parent" does not necessarily have to refer to a student's biological parents, but an "older individual who takes a special interest and helps a teenager develop and understand life values and to build self-confidence" (p. 28). This definition can apply to older siblings, adult friends, employers, community members and school staff. All of these individuals may have some form of interaction with teenagers and it is acceptable if it is someone other than a biological

parent as long as they are capable of making a difference in a student's life (Wheeler, 1992).

When referring to the involvement of parents in educational organizations, teachers and parents have conflicting views. Many teachers believe that parental involvement refers to parents actively taking a role in their children's education by being present at the school; however, parents have a more community-centric view of involvement like getting their children to school and making sure that they are safe (Anderson & Minke, 2007). Epstein (1987) agrees that parents have the basic obligations of providing food, clothing, shelter, health, safety, home training, school supplies, and a positive place for school work and learning in the home in addition to other types of involvement. Because of the conflicting views, teachers may begin to blame parents for the difficulties that their children may face in school and parents may start to feel unappreciated for their efforts (Lawson, 2003). Feuerstein (2000) notes that other researchers believe that parental involvement range from a simple discussion with children about homework to attending a parent-teacher organization meeting. Additionally, parental involvement may refer to any activity that allows the parent to be in contact with the teachers and administrators (Davies, 1987; Epstein, 1987). Thus, it is evident that parents and school officials must clearly decipher the meaning of parental involvement and understand what is expected from both parties (Anderson & Minke, 2007).

## Theoretical Perspective of Parental Involvement

The basis for this study is that students perform exceptionally well in their academics when their parents are more involved in their education. Assessments of parental involvement and student academic achievement have consistently been linked in all grade levels (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). However, this component is stronger in middle and high schools (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). As parents become more involved in the school and learn about the policies and procedures of the school and understand the importance of communication, they are better able to reduce potential behavioral problems of their child, thereby increasing the child's chances of academic potential (Hill, Castellinor, Lansford, Nowlin, Dodge, Bates & Pettit, 2004). Moreover, it has been reported that teachers only contact parents when students are experiencing behavioral problems and parents feel the need to receive more information from teachers (Epstein, 2007). There appears to be some similarities and differences in the beliefs of parents and teachers. Thus, it is vital to examine the perceptions of both parents and teachers as it relates to parental involvement through Epstein's model of the six types of parental involvement.

## Historical Aspects on the Effects of Parental Involvement

### *Early Years*

Many early studies reveal that the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement is a key to having an effective school (Fullan, 1985; Moore, 1984; Purkey & Smith, 1983). Hawley and Rosenholtz (1983) emphasized that parental involvement is a key notion to academic achievement, thus, it has been identified as one

of the four factors in effective schools. Research findings that were collected over two decades conclude that “children have an advantage in school when their parents encourage and support their school activities” and this notion is evident for all grade levels” (Clausen, 1966; Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood & Weinfeld, 1966; Epstein, 1987, p. 119; Leichter, 1974; Lightfoot, 1978; McDill & Rigsby, 1973). Coleman et al. (1966) reveal that the characteristics of a school have very little effect on student achievement. Thus, it has been argued that most of the variations in student learning are due to the differences in family background. In addition, Jencks (1972) also agrees that socioeconomic factors have more of an effect on student achievement than any school related factors.

#### *Recent Years*

More recent research establishes some differences in the findings in previous research. According to Hoy, Tarter, and Hoy (2006) state that both Coleman (1966) and Jencks (1972) have made extremely valid points; however, a few school characteristics predict student achievement. Their findings revealed that the three factors that influence student achievement are “the academic emphasis of a school, the collective efficacy of the faculty, and the faculty’s trust in parents and students” (p. 426). The National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) reveals that improved parental involvement leads to higher academic achievement. However, parental improvement alone will not increase student achievement, but it will significantly impact it when schools and parents work together collaboratively (2006).

Epstein (2007) asserts that more studies have accumulated to show that family involvement is crucial to student success. Those research studies concluded that parents

want to be better informed as to how to properly guide their children through the middle level and high school years. Parents have expressed that they want and need information such as “adolescent development, graduation requirements, college and career planning, and community programs for teens” (2007, p. 16). Such information will assist parents in understanding how their teens develop as well as how to assist them with meeting high school requirements and plan for the future. Additionally, it is believed that educators must take responsibility developing and implementing “goal-linked partnership programs” that extend support to all families that will help the children succeed (2007, p. 16). The implementation of partnership programs not only benefits the students whose parents are directly involved, but also other students without families who are involved (2007). Some studies have confirmed that students earn higher grades in subjects like English and math, have an improvement in reading and writing skills, have better school attendance, are more prepared for each class, display fewer behavior problems and set higher goals (Catsambis & Beveridge, 2001; Hill et al., 2004; Simon, 2004). Additionally, the studies concluded that more parents become involved in useful ways when schools have organized programs and activities for parents. For example, more parents respond when there are workshops for college and career planning (Simon, 2004); direct involvement and support with reading increases student success in the subject (Parcel & Dufur, 2001); communication between educators and parents regarding attendance policies and how it negatively affects the grades and the school’s daily attendance record can greatly improve chronic absenteeism (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Sheldon, in press); and the number of disciplinary actions significantly decreases when

teachers, administrators and parents communicate (Seidman, Lambert, Allen, & Alber, 2003; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002).

### Parental Involvement During the Transition to High School

The meaning of parental involvement remains the same; yet, it is viewed quite differently in different settings. Some researchers believe that the type of parental involvement changes when students enter high school (Baker & Stevenson, 1986; Muller, 1995). The transition from eighth-grade to ninth-grade is crucial to a student's academic career. This transition is important because it determines whether or not the student will be prepared with enough training to complete high school with a diploma and continue on to postsecondary education or leave the educational system (Romo & Falbo, 1996; Schiller, 1999). This transition can be extremely difficult because high school teachers expect students to take more responsibility for their own performance and the high school students must be prepared to accept the pressure of entering a school with a larger enrollment (Schiller, 1999). In contrast, this is the period when parents are more willing to allow greater autonomy (Romo & Falbo 1996; Schiller, 1999; Steinberg, 1996).

Falbo, Lein and Amador (2001) assert that utilizing surveys regarding parental involvement limit the kinds of information that can accurately display what parents do to assist their children with the transition to high school. For example, Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) examined the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) in which data was collected from eighth-grade students and their parents. They found three parent involvement factors that were positively related to academic achievement. The one with the most positive association for academic achievement is the parents' discussion with

their children regarding school at home. Additionally, the parents' supervision and participation had positive correlations as well. They found that the factor with a negative correlation for academic success is communications with the school. Many of the parents who communicated with the school did so because of learning or behavioral difficulties. These parents received more communications from the school and their children were more likely to perform poorly on achievement tests (1996). It was concluded that the above example produced limited information and did not accurately reflect what parents do to assist their children with the transition to high school (Falbo et al., 2001). Thus, to better produce more accurate information, Falbo et al. (2001) conducted a study in parents' homes using open-ended questions in the form of interviews. Parents and students were interviewed during the teen's eighth-grade year and again after the first grading period of high school. Both parents and students were asked to identify positive and negative events that the teen had experienced in school and what caused the events (2001). The researchers used the previous format to uncover "the action that parents took to help their children during the transition to high school" and "what events prompted the actions and whether the parents perceived their efforts as efficacious" (Falbo et al., 2001, p. 513). Because researchers often dichotomize student success as related to school versus family characteristics, the researchers decided to consider the influences of peer networks (2001). Peers have been identified as an influential force that determines high school success (Brown, Mounts, Lamborn & Steinberg, 1993; Fletcher, Darling, Steinberg & Dornbusch, 1995) as well as a more powerful force than parents (Harris, 1995, 1998). It is believed that parents selectively choose neighborhoods in which they will reside and schools that their children will attend simply to control peer influences



(Harris, 1995, 1998; Steinberg, 1996). Additionally, schools play a role in defining peer networks because they place students together in classes; however, they cannot assume responsibility for the social networks that develop (Romo & Falbo, 1996).

Falbo et al. (2001) conducted the study to discover the role that parents play in connecting students to peer networks during the transition to high school. The researchers selected a public middle school with a range of student characteristics in a suburban district. The enrollment was 700 (grades 6-8) with an ethnic-racial mix of 72% White, 10% Black and 18% Hispanic. All of the students were expected to transition to the high school that had an enrollment of 3,300 students in which the ethnic composition was 70% White, 7% Black and 19% Hispanic. Interviews were conducted with 26 families of eighth-grade students and interviews were conducted with the same families, except for three at the end of the student's ninth-grade year. The researchers interviewed both the students and parents using open-ended questions that were similar in content but different in perspective. During the first time the interview was conducted (eighth-grade), 27 questions were used and 40 questions were used during the second interview (ninth-grade). The following three indicators of success were used to determine whether or not the student successfully made the transition to high school (a) passed all coursework, (b) earned enough credits, (c) and attended school often enough to be promoted to the next grade level (tenth). Out of the 23 families that were interviewed at the end of the ninth-grade year, all but three students had successfully made the transition. The parents with the children who successfully made the transition had three common interrelated activities (a) monitoring, (b) evaluating, and (c) intervening (2001).

The results revealed that parents who monitored their teens daily during their transition to high school were more likely to be aware of the difficulties that their children experienced before the issues became significant problems. Through monitoring, the parents learned whether or not their teen was doing homework, attending school and interacting positively with peers. When parents evaluated the information that they received from monitoring their teen, they were able to compare the information of their observations of “what their teen should be thinking, feeling or doing with what they thought their teen should be thinking, feeling or doing” (Falbo et al., 2001, p. 517). Additionally, three kinds of parental interventions were used to assist the teens with making a successful transition to high school (a) active involvement in schoolwork, (b) nesting the teen in a desirable peer network, and (c) direct participation in the school. In order for the students to be successful, parents were encouraged to participate in at least two of the three interventions. In utilizing the first intervention, parents actively involved themselves in their teen’s completion of schoolwork. This may involve tutoring, helping the teen find information for a project or providing encouragement while overseeing homework sessions nightly. In the second intervention of nesting the teen in a desirable peer network, parents often prepared their teen for success in high school by “enrolling them in appropriate middle school coursework and extracurricular activities that led to participation in high school organizations like band, sports teams, or academic clubs” (Falbo et al., 2001, p. 517). Parents also enrolled their teen in private sports leagues, community organizations, church groups, music lessons, etc. which assisted the students in being accepted into various peer groups in the high school setting (Falbo, et al., 2001). The premise of this is that “students would enter high school with an array of peers who

fulfilled the student's needs for affiliation and did so in a way that was consistent with a serious commitment to the meeting the demands of high school" (Falbo et al., 2001, p. 518). The third intervention is direct participation in the school. The parents who were directly involved were more likely to participate in the teen's course selections and extracurricular activities, actively communicate with teachers, counselors and administrators before the teen experienced problems and actively participate in booster clubs, fundraiser events, chaperoned activities (Falbo et al., 2001). It was concluded in the study that the parents who consistently monitored their child through daily observations, participated in homework completion, evaluated information about their teen, created social networks that were supported by or compatible with the school and participated in activities that were designed for parents had children who were more successful in their transition from middle to high school (2001).

### Parental Involvement Models

There are numerous models and options available that schools can utilize to establish or increase parental involvement. Two of the models include the following: Epstein Model and the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model. Additionally, other options follow the models.

#### *Epstein Model*

Epstein (1992) describes several ways in which parents can become involved in their children's education. The six types of involvement are: (a) parenting, (b) communicating with school staff members, (c) volunteering in the school and community, (d) learning at home, (e) decision making, and (f) collaborating with

community organizations (Epstein, 1995). The involvement as described has been identified as methods that school, family, and community partnership programs can utilize to increase parental involvement (Epstein, 2004).

The first type of parental involvement is parenting which is designed to provide tremendous support to parents. This type of involvement encourages schools and parenting programs to assist parents with parenting skills, understanding child and adolescent development and setting home conditions that will be conducive to learning for each age and grade level. Additionally, schools are expected to understand family backgrounds, cultures, and goals for children (Epstein, 2004).

The second type of parental involvement is communicating. It is extremely important for schools to establish a positive school-to-home communication system (Epstein, 1987). The school is responsible for creating a two-way communication system from school to home and home to school (Epstein, 2004). It is the school's responsibility to inform the parents of the following information: (a) open house, (b) calendars and schedules, (c) special events, (d) channels of communication, (e) rules, codes, and policy, (f) goals, programs, and services, (g) report card grades, test scores, and (h) informal evaluations and teacher-parent conferences. Additionally, parents can involve themselves in school activities by assisting teachers and students with class lessons, activities, field trips; assisting administrators, teachers and other school staff members in the cafeteria, library, computer labs, and other school activities; and attending assemblies, sports events, special presentations, workshops, discussion groups, and training sessions (Epstein, 1987).

The third type of parental involvement is volunteering in which schools are expected to provide the time, training and adequate schedules to recruit parents who are willing to support students and school officials with school events.

Learning at home is another type of parental involvement that schools can employ. This type focuses on families becoming involved with activities that promote academic learning within the home environment. Parents can utilize this method by engaging in homework practices, goal setting and other curriculum activities. The teachers can assist in this practice by designing homework activities in which students can share and discuss ideas with family members.

Decision making is another way to get parents involved. Schools are encouraged to allow families to become active participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy activities through organizations such as PTA/PTO, PTSA, school councils, committees and teams.

The last type of parental involvement is collaborating with the community. This type of involvement promotes a comprehensive partnership with the community where schools may develop programs that include various activities like “workshops for parents, newsletters, parent-teacher-student conferences, volunteers, and interactive homework” (Epstein & Jansom, 2004, p. 22). The programs that are developed must be customized to serve the families, interests, and needs of each individual community (Epstein & Jansom, 2004).

#### *Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model*

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) proposed a model of parental involvement from parents’ perspectives. The model includes five levels in which the first

two levels address parents' decision-making processes and the remaining three levels address the manner in which parental involvement positively contributes to student achievement.

The first level of the model describes how parents must make the initial decision to become actively involved in their children's education. The decision can be influenced by role construction, sense of efficacy, or general opportunities and demands. In role construction, parents should refer to their own ideas regarding what they should do in relation to their children's schooling and understand their role as parents. The sense of efficacy refers to parents' beliefs that their involvement in their children's education will positively affect their learning and success. General opportunities and demands can be characterized by generic invitations from the child and the school. General opportunities may be presented when children show enthusiasm about their schoolwork. All of the specifics of level 1 were characterized as the most important section of the model because parents must make the general decision to become involved (1995, 1997).

Level 2 describes variables that may influence the ways in which parents become involved. The variables include (a) parents' specific knowledge and skills in a particular subject area, (b) competing demands such as family and employment and (c) specific invitations from their children or their children's teachers.

Level 3 acknowledges the mechanisms like modeling and reinforcement through which parental involvement influences student outcomes.

Level 4 describes tempering and mediating variables like the parents' use of developmentally appropriate involvement strategies.

Level 5 of the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model describes the student outcomes like the efficacy for doing well in school (1995, 1997). In utilizing this model, researchers were able to conclude positive associations between efficacy and parents' involvement behaviors at home and at school (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1992).

Similar options have been utilized in other studies. Dimock, O' Donoghue and Robb (1996) identify more through categories for parental involvement. These categories include the following: (a) school choice, (b) decision-making through formal structures or site-based councils, (c) teaching and learning, (d) effect on the physical and material environment, and (e) communication.

School choice is the first category for parental involvement. In this category, parents select the educational institutions and experiences for their children. This choice is now available to parents through the legislation of NCLB. This choice is given to parents and students to ensure the students are able to succeed academically regardless of the school environment. With this option, students are able to transfer to another school in their district if the state has determined that their current school is classified as unsafe or if the school has not met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for three consecutive years (U. S. Department of Education, 2006).

The second category for parental involvement is decision-making through formal structures. This type occurs when parents actively participate in school organizations like "school councils or governance groups where they are expected to take part in the collaborative administration of the school" (Feuerstein, 2001, p. 30). The third category is involvement in teaching and learning. This can occur when parents volunteer in the

classroom. Parents should also volunteer out of the classroom by conversing with teachers and assisting with homework and discussing school-related issues with their children at home (Dimock et al., 1996). The fourth category is the effect on the physical and material environment. Parents are expected to ensure their children can learn in a safe and secure environment. The last category is the parents' role in communicating between home and school. Parents are expected to communicate with the school as often as needed regarding student progress, school rules, and student behavior (1996).

Hornby (2000) describes other options that were created in combining and adapting existing models. This option consists of two pyramids that establish a hierarchy of parents' needs and a hierarchy of parents' strengths and potential contributions. The first part of the pyramid utilizes the parental needs. The parental needs are as follows: (a) support, (b) education, (c) liaison, and (d) communication. The second part of the pyramid explains the parental contributions. The parental contributions are as follows: (a) information, (b) collaboration, (c) resource, and (d) policy.

*Parental needs-support.* The level of support involves parents in need of counseling. Usually, parents are very apprehensive about requesting this type of assistance; yet, they may speak with teachers about problems or concerns that they have (Hornby, 2000). It is believed that teachers should have some form of basic counseling skills in which they are able to serve as good listeners that can help parents solve everyday problems or be prepared to refer parents to professional counselors when the problems are beyond their level of competence (2000).

*Parental needs-education.* This form of education takes place when programs are created for the purpose of providing parents with training or workshops that are aimed



towards children's academic progress or behavior management. Some parents are interested in obtaining parenting education that can better assist them in obtaining additional skills or confidence through collaborating with other parents or teachers (2000).

*Parental needs-communication and liaison.* Parents are interested in obtaining information regarding their child's progress at school. During the process, parents view teachers as the main source for obtaining such information. It is imperative for teachers to have effective oral and written communication skills so they are better able to communicate with parents. Additionally, schools should establish an open atmosphere so that parents feel comfortable about contacting or going to the school to express concerns. There are times when teachers are unable to meet with parents or parents are unable to meet with parents. With this in mind, it may be feasible to have a liaison who can serve as a form of communication between the parents and the teachers. This is especially helpful to establish a level of comfort between parents and teachers (2000).

*Parental contributions-information.* Parents are valuable sources of information for schools. They are aware of their children's needs. Parents can provide medical information, academic strengths and weaknesses to better assist the schools in correctly placing children and providing for their needs. This practice can lead to more effective professional practice and the parents realize that the schools actually listen to them regarding their children's needs (2000).

*Parental contributions-collaboration.* Parents can collaborate with teachers so they can reinforce the curriculum that is taught in the classroom. Teachers must be prepared to understand that this type of collaboration cannot take place in every home.

There will be times when some parents do not have the time or have too many other obligations to provide this type of assistance to their children. It may be necessary for teachers to learn skills that will allow them to be more flexible in collaborating with parents (2000).

*Parental contributions-resource.* Many parents have special talents and are willing to voluntarily provide services to the schools and teachers. For example, parents may be able to assist in preparing newsletters, craft activities, curriculum areas, etc. This area can be beneficial for both the parents and teachers. Teachers can take advantage of the services that parents can provide and parents can utilize this opportunity to get active in the school setting (2000).

*Parental contributions-policy.* Some parents may have the time to contribute their expertise by joining a parent or professional organization. Additionally, they may be able to provide in-service training or speaking at conferences or workshops (2000).

#### Parents' Perspectives of Barriers Contributing to the Lack of Parental Involvement

Many factors may contribute to the lack of parental support and involvement. According to Lontos (1991), some barriers that contribute to the lack of parental involvement based on parents' perspectives include the harsh treatment that is directed toward the parents from school officials, cultural and language barriers, logistical problems, time constraints and emotional or economic difficulties.

There are instances when parents feel that they receive harsh treatment from school personnel. Some parents have expressed that they are viewed as "pawns instead of partners in education" (1991, p. 20). Additionally, parents develop distrust in public

schools and therefore may resist authority or parent educational programs due to past educational experiences. Thus, they believe that schools do not treat them equitably (1991). Also, there are instances when parents try to schedule appointments to meet with their children's teachers; yet, some are consistently unavailable or simply do not care about giving parents enough information to help their children be successful (Liontos, 1991).

Cultural and language barriers are also considered a factor as to why parents may not get involved. Some parents have a cultural background that discourages the questioning of schools or teachers. Because of this belief, parents are reluctant to actively participate in the education of their children. They develop the belief that the schools know what is best for their children; thereby, allowing the schools to make decisions for them. Also, cultural differences may play an important role in the lack of participation. Some schools in other countries do not allow parents to make decisions or have any input on education; therefore, parents who were exposed to this type of system may not readily participate in decision-making in American schools (Floyd, 1998). Additionally, some are unable to speak the native language and develop the belief that no progress will be made by meeting with school personnel (Liontos, 1991).

Logistical factors and time constraints are also considered barriers that exist in preventing parents from becoming involved. One study that was conducted revealed that some parents may have problems with transportation or job restrictions that prevent them from attending school events and/or conferences. Some parents work more than one job or they are single parents and must stay home to care for other children (Liontos, 1991).

Some parents even stated that school personnel have little empathy towards them and their problems which also results in disinterest towards active involvement (Floyd, 1998).

Additionally, emotional or economic difficulties may contribute to the lack of involvement. Some parents are insecure about their inability to effectively communicate with school personnel. According to Lontos (1991), the parents display such low self-esteem because they did not complete school and view themselves as failures that do not have the ability to assist their children academically. Thus, they have low expectations of themselves and their children and feel that it is best if they stay away from the school and the teachers (1991).

Also, different levels of resources that are available for some families may pose problems as to why parents cannot be actively involved with the schools. One example is middle class families usually have more flexible work schedules and easier access to transportation than working class families (Lareau, 1989). Additionally, some students reside in homes with single parents who have many other difficulties like the lack of health care and some are facing financial and emotional problems because they reside in high-crime areas (Floyd, 1998).

#### Other Factors that Contribute to the Lack of Parental Involvement

Additionally, it is believed that other factors may affect the lack of participation from parents (Benson, 1986; Chavkin, 1993). Studies have been done to determine the other factors that may impact parental involvement in schools. Hilliard (1989) studied and compared the behavioral styles in African and African American culture to European and European American culture. He concluded that individuals with comparable abilities

have different habits and preferences due to cultural socialization (1989). Bennett (1995) expanded the works of Hilliard (1989) and Cohen (1969) by identifying individual exceptions within each style. It has been suggested that the cultural cognitive learning styles, analytical and relational are reflected in the ways in which families socialize (Floyd, 1998).

According to Floyd (1998), the analytical style is developed more in middle class and highly organized families where there are specialized functions for each family member. For example, both the father and mother may work, but the mother may be responsible for taking care of the home. When individuals are raised in this style of family, they tend to “learn independently” and “do not require social settings or concepts to promote learning” and they are “self-motivated and confident about controlling their environments” (Floyd, 1998, p. 3). Many schools tend to favor students who possess this learning style (Floyd, 1998).

Relational style individuals normally come from shared, functional families that are often low income and minority families. Benson (1986) states that the individuals in such families are feeling and people oriented. Human interaction and physical closeness occurs between children and adults. Many of the responsibilities are shared by all family members that results in no one person being in an authoritative position (Floyd, 1998). Such individuals enjoy verbal and physical activities and are dependent as it relates to learning. Thus, socialization practices affect how an individual interacts in various settings (1998). Parenting styles are culturally related and determines the learning styles of children resulting in educators having to create parental involvement programs in which cultural preferences must be considered rather than forcing all families to fit into

the traditional family involvement programs (Bennett, 1995; Cohen, 1969; Floyd, 1998; Hilliard, 1989).

### Factors Influencing Levels of Parental Involvement

According to O' Bryan, Braddock, and Dawkins (2006), researchers have identified many factors that influence the levels of parental involvement including gender, race/ethnicity, family socioeconomic status (SES), parent's educational attainment, student's gender and student's age. The literature suggests that the most involved parents tend to be White females (Leitch & Tangri, 1988; Moles, 1987), have higher educational background and have higher income (Moles, 1987; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Additionally, parents tend to exhibit higher levels of involvement with their daughters more than their sons (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). Research suggests that the fathers and mothers have different roles in the family and each parent also interacts differently with their children (Lamb, 1997; Parke, 1995). Regardless of the age of children, fathers tend to interact more with their sons than daughters (Harris, Furstenberg & Marmer, 1998; Marsiglio, 1991; Radin, 1981).

Epstein (1987) asserts that single parents have been found to exhibit more involvement with at-home aspects of their children's education while married parents tend to be more involved in activities at the school. Also, involvement decreases as the children transition from elementary to middle and from middle to high school. Parents tend to believe that their involvement is not as important with their adolescent children (Epstein, 1987, 1990; Stevenson & Baker, 1987; Zill & Nord, 1994). Also, the adolescents tend to develop an autonomous identity that is separate from that of their

parents and they discourage parents from participating in their school experiences (O'Bryan et al., 2006).

The National Household Education Survey of 1996 describes a distinctive pattern of data for parental involvement as it relates to mothers and fathers (Nord, Brimhall, & West, 1997). In two-parent households, 30% of fathers were highly involved in elementary schools, 25% in middle schools and 23% in high schools. In contrast, mothers were more involved at each level with 68% in elementary, 51% in middle and 39% in high schools. With single father households, 53% were involved in elementary and middle schools and 27% in high schools. In single mother households, 60% were highly involved in elementary, 44% in middle and 32% in high schools (1997).

According to the U. S. Department of Education (1992), there are variations in both the levels and types of parental involvement in the data retrieved from the NELS. For example, in 1988, 79% of parents reported that they regularly discussed current school experiences with their eighth-grade children. However, only 47% of parents discussed plans for high school with their children and 38% discussed plans after high school. For African American parents, the amount of discussions of current school experiences was comparable to that of the overall average with 75%. However, African American parents reported higher levels of discussions of their children's future educational plans. Fifty-eight percent of African American parents reported that they regularly discussed high school plans and 51% regularly discussed plans after high school.

Additionally, socio-psychological factors influence the levels of parental involvement (O'Bryan et al., 2006). Eccles and Harold (1996) suggest that parental

involvement is higher among parents who are confident in their abilities to assist their children. The parent's perception of their children's academic abilities and parental educational aspirations also influences high parental involvement (O'Bryan et al., 2006). Another influencing factor is the characteristics of the school. For example, parents tend to be more involved in smaller schools or private schools (Zill & Nord, 1994). According to O'Bryan et al. (2006), it is important to note that such school characteristics play a role in the varying levels of parental involvement because minorities such as African Americans are over-represented in urban, public schools which are larger than schools in suburban areas (U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

#### Gender Differences in Parental Involvement

Carter and Wojtkiewicz (2000) assert that there is a tremendous amount of research examining the relationship between parental involvement and academic success; however, little research has been done to determine if there are gender differences as it relates to parental involvement. Some studies have concluded that parents tend to favor sons over daughters. Examples were given to confirm the above premise. One example is that fathers who have sons are more involved with their sons than daughters (Harris & Morgan, 1991). Other examples are mothers of sons are more concerned about child obedience (Downey, Jackson, & Powell, 1994) and parents of sons are less likely to divorce (Morgan, Lye, & Condran, 1988). The literature on gender role socialization confirms that sons are treated differently than daughters because of patriarchal values that are expressed in society that males are elevated over females in social order (Lorber, 1994; Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, 1992).



Carter and Wojtkiewicz (2000) state that gender differences have been reported regarding students' skills and participation in science and math courses (Catsambis, 1994; Entwisle et al., 1994), perceptions of academic ability (Wigfield & Eccles, 1994), educational expectations (Hanson, 1994), and parents' perceptions of students' math ability (Eccles et al., 1990; Eccles & Jacobs, 1986). Because of the negative consequence of the gender bias, females have been reported of having lower self-concepts than males concerning their mathematical ability (Wigfield & Eccles, 1994). Catsambis (1994) found that male students who expressed their interest in math related fields were double compared to the female students. In contrast, other research concluded that females are more likely to graduate from high school and enter and graduate from college at about the same rate as their male counterparts (Mare, 1995; U.S. Department of Education, 1996). Other research concludes that females generally have a lower employment status in the labor market than males because of their success in school (Spain & Bianchi, 1996).

The research that has been done on gender differences as it relates to parental involvement has many different outcomes. One study concluded that fathers' involvement did not differ based on the gender of the child; however, mothers were more involved with their daughters than sons (Bogensneider, 1997).

A different study concluded that females are more willing to talk to their parents concerning school-related topics as it relates to educational success more than males (Muller, 1993, 1998; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). However, the study did not control for academic factors like grades, test scores and educational aspirations and therefore it may be a possibility that parents talk frequently with good students regardless of gender (Carter & Wojtkiewicz, 2000).

Due to the many variations and conclusions in the literature regarding the gender differences in parental involvement, Carter and Wojtkiewicz (2000) conducted their own study utilizing data from the NELS. In this study, data was gathered from 1, 052 randomly selected public and private schools in the U. S. Approximately 25, 000 eighth-grade students were selected from the schools in the sample. In the study, parental involvement was analyzed based on the perspectives of the adolescents. The dependent variables included school discussion, parental expectations, parent-school connection, parental supervision, and parental attendance.

The results of the study revealed that female students engaged more frequently in school-related discussions with their parents than male students. Additionally, parents had higher expectations for the educational attainment of their daughters than sons. One explanation of this finding is that “parents had higher expectations of their daughters due to the current conditions in the labor market, in which post-secondary education is necessary for females to get higher paying jobs” (Carter & Wojtkiewicz, 2000, p. 39).

In contrast with the results above, parents get more involved with the schools as it relates to their sons (Carter & Wojtkiewicz, 2000). Stevenson and Baker (1987) found that parents are more involved with school activities with boys and in home activities with girls; yet, parents are overall more involved with girls. The findings also revealed that parents are less likely to check the homework of their daughters than sons. However, it is still unclear as to whether the parental involvement is related to nonacademic issues like behavioral problems which are known to be more common in adolescent males. Also, it was found that the involvement with boys is more likely to diminish over time whereas the involvement with girls is more constant (Carter & Wojtkiewicz, 2000).

In another study, Muller (1998) concluded that girls talked more with their parents than boys. Also, it was reported that students had more frequent conversations about their high school programs with their mothers than with their fathers, but boys talked more about their programs with their fathers than girls (1998). Additionally, it has been concluded that when fathers talk about high school with their sons, it is usually in the form of discipline or intervention because the behavior of boys demands it (Muller, 1995). Also, fathers are more interested in their sons because they feel the need to shape their sons' lives rather than their daughters. This assertion is also based on the premise that boys experience more school-related behavioral problems and need more guidance than girls (1995). According to Muller (1995), "parents may be more nurturing and restrictive toward their daughters but may discipline their sons more and they may reach out to the school differently for their sons than for their daughters" (p. 344). Nevertheless, the research presents a variety of outcomes for gender differences in parental involvement.

#### Differences in Ethnicity and Parental Involvement

Parents of different ethnic groups are involved in their children's education in different ways. A NCES (1994a) report revealed that African American parents are more likely to visit their child's classrooms and that Asian American parents are less likely to communicate directly with their child's teachers. In contrast, Asian American parents have higher expectations of their children's success in education and are usually more involved in their children's academic activities (Huang & Waxman, 1993).

Fan (2001) conducted a study to determine the differences in the parents' educational aspirations as it relates to ethnicity. The following four ethnic groups were examined in the study (a) Hispanics, (b) African Americans, (c) White Americans, and (d) Asian Americans. In order to complete the study, data from the National Education Longitudinal of 1988 was used. The total sample size used in the study ranged from 10, 370 to 10, 624. This included a range of 592 to 611 Asian Americans, 891 to 929 African Americans, 1,062 to 1,113 Hispanics and 7,664 to 7,813 Whites. The study concluded that there was little difference between the educational aspirations of Asian American and Hispanic families. Additionally, African American parents had higher educational aspirations than White parents; however, there was higher academic achievement amongst the White students than the African American students (2001).

In contrast, another study reported different parent involvement models were used for Asian American and Native Americans than for White, African American and Hispanic students. The use of different parent involvement models yielded different effects on academic achievement (Keith, Keith, Quirk, Sperduto, Santillo, & Killings, 1998). A similar study was recently conducted to determine if there were ethnic differences in the direct and indirect effects that parental involvement had on academic achievement. The results for the White sample indicated that parental factors of communication and parental aspiration are most effective and have an immediate and long-lasting (at least four years) effect on student achievement. The results for the Asian American sample indicated that parental participation is the most effective forms of involvement with an immediate and long-lasting effect. Additionally, the parental aspiration was effective; however, it was immediate, but short-term for achievement. The

African American sample revealed that educational aspirations was important and had an immediate effect on student achievement; yet, parental supervision had a long-lasting effect. This sample did not reveal in immediate or initial effect on student achievement. The Hispanic sample indicated that parental communication is the only effective factor for parental involvement that had a direct effect on student achievement. For this sample, the communication factor only had an immediate effect, but not long-lasting across all four years (Hong & Ho, 2005).

Additionally, the study revealed that indirect effects through the mediator of student educational aspiration were consistent and long-lasting across all four ethnic groups for both initial achievement status as well as academic growth (2005). In addition to communication and parental educational aspiration, parental participation and supervision affected students in the African American sample only. Moreover, parental participation had a positive effect on achievement and supervision had a negative effect (2005).

### The Effects of Family Structure on Student Success

The structure of a family may serve as an indicator of student success. Coleman (1988) argues that one-parent families have less time to devote towards interacting with their child. Children in single-parent families receive less support, assistance with homework and encouragement from families than children from two-parent families (Amato, 1987; Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Nock, 1988). This is partially due to the economic position of their family. According to Garfinkel and McLanahan (1986) and Bane and Ellwood (1983), single mother families are more likely to be poor than other

families and their poverty is more extreme. If they are living above the poverty line, income insecurity is more likely to occur within this type of household (Duncan & Hoffman, 1985). Additionally, there are variations in family types. Children from stepfamilies are at as much disadvantage as those from single-parent families. These children receive less encouragement and involvement than those children residing with two biological parents (Astone & McLanahan, 1991; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Sternber, 1987). Astone and McLanahan (1991) revealed in their study that children from single parent families and step families receive less parental encouragement and attention to educational activities than children residing with biological parents. Additionally, the children reported that there are lower expectations from parents, less homework monitoring and less overall supervision of social activities. The study also revealed that changes in the family structure may cause a decline in parental involvement which negatively affects student grades, attendance, attitudes, expectations, school retention and completion of high school (1991).

Change in family structure may occur with the divorce, remarriages or military deployment. Such conditions create interference in the learning process for some students (Davis & Robelen, 2003; Jerome, Lang, & Brass, 2005) and are frequently accompanied by changes in school performance (Simons, 1996). This occurs more frequently in homes that lack structure rather than those that are structurally stable. Thus, the family structure may contribute to the outcome of a child's success.

## Review of Parental Involvement Programs

After the reauthorization of Goals 2000, parent involvement in education was made a priority across the U.S. This implementation encouraged school districts nationwide to reexamine their policies and procedures for parental involvement (Kessler-Sklar & Baker, 2000). When Goals 2000 was in place, school districts could receive Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) money if the district allocated at least 1% for parent involvement programs. This federal initiative created a national vision for school-home partnerships and provided funding to carry out the vision. It is then the responsibility of the school district to effectively utilize the limited funding and resources and to create effective policies and practice that can lead to the development of parental involvement programs (2000).

Since data was not available to determine whether or not the parent involvement programs that were implemented in various areas across the U.S. actually achieved the goals of parent involvement policy, Kessler-Sklar and Baker (2000) conducted a national survey of school districts “to generate information about current district policies, programs, and practices regarding parent involvement in order to build on and extend the knowledge base concerning strengthening school-home collaborative partnerships” (p. 102). They used policies and programs in six areas of interest: (a) giving parents the opportunity to serve as decision-makers, (b) regular communications with parents regarding school programs and their child’s progress, (c) communicating with parents about ways they can help their children be successful in school, (d) providing staff with training that will assist them in working with families, (e) embracing diversity and providing support to diverse families, and (f) providing resources to social service

agencies to address family needs. Educators, policy makers and researchers endorse the above areas as keys to children's school success (Baker, 1996; Epstein, 1992; Moles, 1993a, 1993b).

Kessler-Sklar and Baker (2000) collected data on the extent to which the above types of parent involvement have been "sanctioned formally by district-level policy and the ways in which they have been incorporated into the educational programs and practices of school districts across the United States" (p. 103). The hypotheses of the study are school districts in more affluent areas with a less diverse population and more resources will have formal parent involvement policies and the school districts in the less affluent areas and a more diverse population with fewer resources will have a greater need for parent involvement to improve the students' academic outcomes.

The actual study addressed the following three questions in each district (a) to what extent do districts report formal policies supporting six major types of parent involvement, (b) are district characteristics associated with the adoption of parent involvement policies, (c) what kinds of programs are reported by districts to implement parent involvement policies? (Kessler-Sklar & Baker, 2000). To complete this study, the researchers sent 435 surveys to superintendents in 15 states across the U.S. and 196 districts responded. The responding districts were diverse in geographic areas, socioeconomic characteristics, ethnicity and urbanicity (2000).

The results revealed that 90% of the school districts reported having at least one policy that supported parents' involvement and their children's education. The most frequently adopted policies involved the communication with parents about school programs and children's progress and the supporting parents in making decisions



regarding school policies and practices. Additionally, there were a low percentage of districts which reported having a policy in which teachers and staff members are trained to work effectively with parents. It is believed that teachers must have training so that parent involvement programs can be effective (Shartrand, Kreider, & Erikson-Warfield, 1994). About half of the school districts reported having a policy that provided links to social services which is necessary in the era of welfare reform (Kessler-Sklar & Baker, 2000). With each district having at least one involvement policy in place, the research still does not provide information on the effectiveness of the practices for each involvement policy nor does it disclose the number of parents who actually participate in the programs and practices that have been reported for each district (2000).

While there are many parental involvement programs in various school districts, many “institute a collection of disjointed activities with no clear purpose or sense of direction” (Shepard & Rose, 1995, p. 373). A plethora of research shows that the implementation of parental involvement programs will positively affect students academically (Shepard & Rose, 1995). Some of the research document immediate improvements in standardized test score (Goodson & Hess, 1976; Graue, Weinstein, and Walberg, 1983) as well as improvements in skills such as reading (Hewison, 1988). Additionally, studies have revealed other indicators that have improved because of parental involvement programs such as dropout rates, parental attitudes toward schools and parental feelings of self-efficacy (Epstein, 1986; Henderson, 1987; Cochran & Dean, 1991). Even though parental involvement programs are worthwhile and may contribute to student success, many programs tend to lack an organizational structure (Rasinski &

Fredericks, 1989). Therefore, Shepard and Rose (1995) present a model that provides a framework for increasing parental involvement through empowerment.

### *Historical Context of Intervention Models for Parental Involvement Programs*

For the past 100 years, society has increasingly influenced children due to compulsory and formal education (Shepard & Rose, 1995). The increase in societal responsibility is a direct result in the decline of the parental role (Mann & Blackwell, 1992). “Parents gradually become more reliant on the school’s judgment and the school’s attempt to understand their children’s abilities, personalities and intellectual potential” (Mann & Blackwell, 1992, p. 287).

Early on, policymakers began to recognize the importance of early intervention to assist in improving the lives of children including the at-risk or disadvantaged (Shepard & Rose, 1995). Home intervention models started as a deficit model approach which was established in the 1960s, a difference model which evolved in the 1970s and early 1980s to the current trend of the empowerment model (Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez & Bloom, 1993).

The deficit model programs were created based on the assumption that families did not provide skills, resources, and stimulation that was necessary to prepare their children for school. This model was highly criticized because community factors were not considered. Additionally, it was believed that the values and standards endorsed by the schools were superior to those of families (Kellaghan et al., 1993).

The difference models were created based on the assumption that school and home cultures were different and that children could adapt to a new culture by their unique learning styles and abilities (Zigler & Berman, 1983). Both of the previously

mentioned models “encouraged a sense of helplessness and incompetence in parents” which led to the creation of the empowerment model (Shepard & Rose, 1995, p. 374).

The goal of the empowerment models was to provide parents with resources that will enable them to better manage their own lives and the lives of their children and to allow them more autonomy and self-direction (Shepard & Rose, 1995). It is believed that school personnel can often view parents who are of a lower socioeconomic status as unwilling or unable to become involved in their child’s academics (1995). Epstein and Dauber (1991) confirmed this belief when a study was conducted and revealed that teachers believed that parents of children from urban areas were disinterested in their child’s academics and did not want to be involved; however, it was found that the parents were interested and wanted to know what they could do to be of assistance to their children. Thus, the negative attitude of school personnel towards parenting practices can subvert the empowerment process (Shepard & Rose, 1995).

Swick and Graves (1993) summarize the impact of negative attitudes by stating that teachers often communicate using a direct, authority-based form of communication towards the parents. This type of communication is ineffective and can often lead to a chaos especially with parents from a lower socioeconomic background. To effectively communicate with such parents, it is suggested that school personnel utilize “closeness and mutuality” (Swick & Graves, 1993, p. 144). The empowerment models eliminates the above premise by emphasizing that school personnel must view parents as having the ability to do the following: (a) utilize resources effectively, (b) be effective problem-solvers, and (c) productively interacting with others (Swick & Graves, 1993). Swick and

Graves (1993) assert that school personnel must commit themselves to the following in order to assist parents in becoming more empowered:

1. Recognize that parents are principle educators for their children and they should be valued as respected partners (Kellaghan et al., 1993).
2. Emphasize the strengths of each family instead of deficiencies (Cochran & Dean, 1991).
3. View children in the context of their current family, school, and community environment (Powell, 1989).
4. View parents as valued sources who are experts about their children (Swick & Graves, 1993).

There are various examples of empowerment models. Epstein (1992) proposed six types of parent involvement activities that described the responsibilities and benefits for participants. Rasinski and Fredericks (1989) developed a hierarchy of involvement that transitioned teachers and parents from a monitoring stage to a participation and empowerment stage. Finally, Bloom (1992) developed seven prototypes of involvement that functioned at the basic, participation or advocacy stages.

Shepard and Rose (1995) created a model that utilizes some of the elements from other frameworks. The first stage that is described is basic communication. This is the stage in which there is a two-way interaction between the parents and teachers. During this stage, parents are expected to accept the responsibility for monitoring their child's progress and taking a greater interest in their child's welfare. Additionally, parents are expected to readily accept teacher generated information regarding their child's progress.

The second stage is the home improvement stage. This stage requires an increased commitment on behalf of the parents. This stage utilizes activities that are designed to

enhance parenting skills and/or skills that involve improvement of the child's home-learning environment. In order for parents to be successful at this stage, they must be more trusting of others and confident enough to want to acquire additional information and learn from others.

The third stage of empowerment is volunteering. During this stage, the parents have greater contact with the school. Parents have confidence in their abilities because they will interact more with school personnel and other parents. They are expected to engage in involvement that extends beyond the home environment.

The last stage is the advocacy stage. During this stage, parents are involved at the local, district, or statewide levels. This type of involvement will affect the policies, procedures and potential changes in the community. Parents are normally involved at this level when they have acquired the necessary confidence, knowledge, skills and abilities needed to communicate effectively with individuals at this level and they display the ability to influence the decisions that will impact their child's school (1995).

The above model was created to give parents the ability to develop the necessary skills that will allow them empowerment. In order for schools to effectively utilize the model, they must understand that it requires more than communicating with parents and providing training in certain skills. It also involves an increase in self-trust as well as trust in others. Additionally, it requires awareness of resources, and a sense of purpose and responsibility to the environment as well as to families (Shepard & Rose, 1995).

Because of the ubiquitous belief that parental involvement and academic achievement are related, many school districts have implemented parental involvement programs like parent academies or parent universities that serve the purpose of educating

parents on how to effectively contribute to participating in their children's academic endeavors by allowing professional and personal growth opportunities (Guilbert, 2006).

When implementing a parental involvement program, it is suggested that schools review the types of families and characteristics of the parents instead of the programs that the students are enrolled. This is important because the schools can better identify the needs of the students and parents and decide how to best implement strategies (Wheeler, 1992). Schools must be aware of the specific family characteristics before designing a parental involvement program. For example, programs that are designed for suburban housewives would be inappropriate for low-income parents (1992).

Floyd (1998) describes Joining Hands which is a parental involvement program that started as a community-based research project and was later developed and funded to "enhance families' involvement in their children's education" (de Acosta, 1997, p. 1) "by building on the foundation of the parents' already established strengths" (Floyd, 1998, p. 126). This program targeted primary and elementary school students. For this program, four training modules were created based on the concerns and needs of parents and the perceptions of teachers and principals and additional research on successful parental involvement programs.

The four modules included strategies for basic reading readiness, visual discrimination and visual memory reading skills, math readiness activities and homework, home/school schedules and teaching social skills. All training material was printed on loose-leaf paper and was placed in three-ring binders which were given to the parents at the first training session. Before the implementation of the program, parents were thoroughly interviewed to determine their concerns and needs. Information gathered

from principals and teachers was also taken into consideration. One of the major goals of the program was to improve the communication and interaction between family and school staff members to educationally benefit the children.

The program was conducted on two separate occasions in two different locations to determine whether it will be more feasible in one setting or the other. The first session was held at a local community center since parents expressed that they feel more comfortable in a nontraditional school setting. The second session was held in a community library. Each meeting began with an informational presentation and transitioned to activities where parents were able to make games and learning devices that were age appropriate for their own children. Parents were encouraged to share the same experiences at home by incorporating their children in various educational activities.

The conclusions of the study revealed that the first session was more successful than the second because it was held in the community center where some parents previously received services, transportation and child care was provided and the time of the training was based on the availability of the parents. Because some alterations were made to the second session, it was less successful. In the second session, the schools were responsible for contacting the parents and setting the time for the meetings which were held immediately after school. In addition, schools designated the facilitator to lecture rather than allowing the facilitator to lead hands-on activities for the parents to participate. The facilitator for both sessions was a counselor who had extensive experience in dealing with battered women, female adolescents, homeless men and

females under jurisdiction. This facilitator played an important role in providing comfort to the parents because of her nurturing personality (Floyd, 1998).

In order to successfully implement a parental involvement program, schools should consider conducting research to understand the behavioral and cultural styles of the families of the children enrolled. Programs can be successful whether it is a school or district-wide effort. Schools must prepare to embrace the notion that the idea of parental involvement programs is to get parents to become “active partners” in their children’s education. Since academic success is the core goal, it is recommended that programs implement workshops where parents are given the necessary tools like homework strategies, teacher-interaction, discipline, and how to navigate through the school system (Guilbert, 2006).

### Models to Improve Parent-Teacher Relationships

Many teachers and parents have similar concerns on what is needed to improve involvement as it relates to student achievement. Hornby (2000) has led various workshops in which he assesses the needs and wants from both parents and teachers. When determining the needs of parents, he concludes that parents would like the following from teachers: (a) more consultation and agreement to thoroughly listen, (b) more open and approachable attitude, (c) willingly admit if they are unsure or do not know something, (d) immediate contact of the parent if they suspect a problem with the student, (e) treat all children with respect, (f) make allowances for individual differences with children, (g) identify and attempt to remediate learning difficulties, (h) effectively discuss student progress at parent-teacher conferences, (i) correct classwork and



homework regularly, (j) regularly send detailed reports of each child's progress, (k) be more involved with parent-teacher associations (PTAs), and (l) use parents more as a resource in the school (2000).

In contrast, teachers are very much interested in obtaining assistance from parents. In doing so, Hornby (2000) concludes that parents can do the following to assist teachers: (a) openly communicate about children's special needs or health problems, (b) inform them of any home circumstances that may affect students, (c) cooperate in reinforcing school discipline at home, (d) reinforce school programs at home like supervising homework or listening to children read, (e) teach children what is expected of them at school, (f) have realistic expectations of what their children are capable of doing, (g) attend PTA meetings, (h) regularly participate in meetings with teachers to discuss children's progress, (i) read and acknowledge reports and letters that are sent home, (j) inform the school of any updates or changes in contact information, (k) keep children home if they are not well, and (l) and volunteer at the school.

It is believed that parents and teachers should develop relationships because many have very similar concerns (2000). In order to define an approach to parent-teacher relationships, Hornby (2000) discusses the following six most common models that may improve or harm the relationship between parents and teachers (a) protective model, (b) expert model, (c) consumer model, (d) curriculum-enrichment model, (e) transmission model, and (f) partnership model.

#### *Protective Model*

The purpose of the protective model is to avoid conflict between parents and teachers. Within this model, the functions of teachers and parents are separated. The role

of the teachers is to carry out the education of children at school. The role of the parents is to ensure that children are adequately prepared and on time for school (Swap, 1993). This model is considered as the most common model for parent-teacher relationships (1993).

### *Expert Model*

With the expert model, teachers consider themselves as experts over the development and education of children (Cunningham & Davis, 1985). This model allows little autonomy for parents because the teachers make decisions regarding their students and the parents are expected to simply receive information. There are a few problems with this approach. One problem is that parents are expected to be dependent on teachers. Another problem is that teachers may overlook some of the problems or abilities that students have because they do not adequately utilize the knowledge that the parents possess regarding their own children. Because of the “expert” mentality that teachers may possess, parents are reluctant about questioning teachers’ decisions. Parents are normally dissatisfied when they interact with teachers who have adopted this approach (1985).

### *Consumer Model*

This model regards parents as consumers while teachers are viewed as consultants of educational services. Parents are normally allowed to control the decision-making process and teachers provide the parents with relevant information and options. This approach requires teachers to listen to parents and allow parents to be the experts. Normally when this approach is utilized, parents are satisfied because they are in control of the decisions that they make and the services that they receive (Cunningham & Davis, 1985). The disadvantage of this approach is that parents can make decisions that may not

be necessarily be beneficial for the student or in the student's best interest (Hornby, 2000).

#### *Curriculum-enrichment Model*

The goal of the model is to allow parents to contribute information related to the school curriculum. This model is feasible if the parents have expertise and can positively contribute to the curriculum material that will enhance the learning objectives in the school (Swap, 1993). This model has been used to assist in the implementation of multicultural education. Parents who possess a diverse background in ethnicity, religion, or culture can collaborate with teachers and assist them by providing suggestions in developing curricula that can reflect that particular background. The disadvantage of this model is that it can appear as threatening to teachers because parents would have a major input in what is taught and how it is taught (Hornby, 2000).

#### *Partnership Model*

This model can be considered one of the most appropriate models in establishing a parent-teacher relationship. With this model, teachers are considered experts in the area of education and parents are considered experts of their children. When parents and teachers work together and share their expertise, they are better able to develop a partnership that will provide children the opportunity to be academically successful. One advantage of this model is that it allows teachers to contribute objectivity (Hornby, 2000). According to Hornby (2000), some parents have an emotional attachment to their children which may cause subjectivity when they consider the child's needs and abilities. The essential ingredient to this approach is that an understanding of mutual respect must be established between both parties. Additionally, this approach includes four key

aspects: two-way communication; mutual support; joint decision-making; and enhancement of learning at school and at home (Hornby, 2000).

### School Strategies to Increase Parental Involvement

The National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) (2006) reported that schools lack adequate plans to increase parental involvement. Before schools can create plans, they must consider different cultural learning styles in their planning and be aware that diverse students and families may require nontraditional strategies (Floyd, 1998). When the schools create plans, it is easier to set and reach achievable goals (NSPRA, 2006). There are various strategies that schools can utilize to increase parental involvement.

According to Wheeler (1992), schools should thoroughly train and prepare teachers and other staff members to utilize a positive-negative-positive communication with parents which may encourage parents to become more active in the school environment. Teachers are consistently expected to contact parents if their children are failing; yet, they are rarely encouraged to contact parents for positive reasons. Schools should consider developing a record keeping system and to review it to ensure that parents are being contacted on a regular basis. This type of system can be created and various staff members can be assigned a certain group of students who are responsible for maintaining consistent contact with their designated group of parents. A way to begin this type of contact is to have the designated staff members make initial contact with parents within the first two weeks of school in which they must provide positive feedback. Thereafter, contact can be made on a monthly basis. The staff member is responsible for

informing the parents of the student's grades, behavior and progress in all of his or her classes as well as informing the parents of upcoming events that are taking place in the school setting (Wheeler, 1992). The first step in establishing this type of communication is to provide professional development opportunities for staff members to learn how to properly communicate with parents (1992).

Wheeler (1992) suggests that schools encourage staff members to understand the increase in diversity, establish trust with families and to respect the family culture and language. Schools may start by translating documents for parents and/or providing staff members who are multilingual to work with a specified group of parents. Staff members must also be encouraged to listen to the parents because they know more about their own children's interests and needs than the staff members at the school. As parents make suggestions for the schools to properly serve their children, it may also be necessary for the school's staff members to encourage parents to embrace and practice their own suggestions.

Wheeler (1992) also suggests that schools utilize the three F's—fun, family, and food when planning a school activity. If schools want parents to participate in school activities, they must offer convenience to the parents. Parents are more comfortable and more likely to attend a school event if they do not have to worry about child care for smaller children or preparing dinner for their families after the school's event. Thus schools can provide meals, child care or activities for the entire family (Wheeler, 1992; Padgett, 2006).

Additionally, schools should create a formal plan that should be set early that can assist in achieving the goals of increasing parental involvement and identify the barriers

that prevent more involvement and develop an understanding that can contribute to developing a plan to encourage parents to get more involved. Also, school officials should utilize their creativity and involve the community as an effort to get parents more involved (Padgett, 2006; NSPRA, 2006).

Secondary schools should consider providing support for parents dealing with adolescence. It is important to know that it is not that parents do not care about their children once they reach the period of adolescence, but some need assistance and support so they are able to better provide the best environment for their adolescents (Liontos, 1991). Liontos (1991) suggests that parents do the following to become involved at the secondary level: (a) assist with homework, (b) review assignments, (c) regularly consult with teachers, (d) assist in schedule planning with counselors and teachers, (e) serve as a resource person, (f) assist in the classrooms or at school events, (g) initiate conferences, (h) provide study time and a good study environment, (i) promote writing at home, (j) provide educational resources, (k) model appropriate skills and behaviors, (l) blend education and family activities, (m) discuss goals with children, (n) post examples of good work, (o) reinforce skills, (p) regularly visit classrooms, and (q) encourage improvement and praise good performance. With these strategies in mind, the school and the parents can accept the premise that they are working for the student to become academically successful (1991).

## Summary

Chapter 2 provides an extensive literature review as it relates to parental involvement in education. The sections included a brief introduction, definition of

parental involvement, effects of parental involvement on academic achievement, parental involvement during the transition to high school, parental involvement models, parents' perspectives of barriers contributing to the lack of parental involvement, other barriers contributing to the lack of parental involvement, factors influencing the levels of parental involvement, gender differences in parental involvement, differences in ethnicity and parental involvement, family structure and student success, review of parental involvement programs, models to improve parent-teacher relationships and school strategies to increase parental involvement.

## CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

Public high school students are faced with numerous obstacles in their high school years resulting in the need for actively involved parents. It is not known why parents are not more actively involved at the high school level, what the possible deterrents are, or what may encourage improved levels of involvement. Studies have identified parental involvement as an essential ingredient to improving student achievement. The purpose of this study was to assess the perceptions of teachers and parents regarding the lack of parental involvement in a suburban high school and to present information to assist educators in developing and maintaining ongoing relationships with parents and encouraging them to remain involved throughout the high school years.

### Statement of the Problem

A tremendous amount of research has been done regarding parental involvement in elementary schools; however, a limited amount has been done that focuses on parental involvement in high schools. Furthermore, parental involvement is not only needed in the elementary school setting, but is especially needed during the secondary stages of education. As Jeynes (2007) asserts, the “influence of parental involvement overall is significant for secondary school children” (p. 82). Jeynes (2007) and Hara (1998) assert that the key to improving children’s academic achievement is an increase in parental



involvement. Thus, in order to ensure that parental involvement is effectively promoted in public high schools, it is necessary for educational leaders to assess parents' and teachers' perceptions of parental involvement. It is not known why parents are not more actively involved at the high school level, what the possible deterrents are, or what may encourage improved levels of involvement.

The study addressed the levels of parental involvement through an in depth analysis of the following research questions and hypotheses:

1. What are the perceived barriers, if any, that teachers identify regarding the lack of parental involvement?
2. What are the perceived barriers, if any, that parents identify regarding the lack of parental involvement?
3. What are the perceptions of parents who actively participate in their child's educational studies and school as compared to parents who do not actively participate in their child's educational studies and school?
4. What are the school factors that parents identify that may encourage parental involvement?
5. Parental involvement is highly encouraged in this school.
6. Teachers actively focus on clearly communicating with parents so they may stay abreast of their child's academic status.
7. Parents actively focus on clearly communicating with teachers.
8. There are some barriers that may prevent parents from being proactive in their child's education.
9. Teachers and parents believe that students are better able to perform when their parents are involved in the school.

## Research Design

A researcher begins a research study by identifying a problem (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). In this case, the problem exists from the lack of parental involvement in a high school setting. When a problem is identified, the researcher may then develop research questions that need to be answered to explain the problem. As guiding questions are developed, one must decide on the research method that will be used to answer the research questions (2003).

A case study of a suburban high school utilizing mixed methodology was employed to investigate the research questions. A case study is based on “intensive study of specific cases” that is “defined by interest in individual cases” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003, p. 435). Yin (2003) asserts that case study research is “appropriate when the researcher has little control over events and the focus is based on contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context” (p. 1). This study is directly aligned with those guidelines because the researcher has little control over the events that occur at the high school in which the study was conducted. Additionally, the focus of the study was based on the perspectives of parental involvement practices in the school.

Case studies provide the researcher with an opportunity to understand a social phenomenon while retaining “holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 2003, p. 2). In utilizing the case study method, the researcher was able to gain an in depth understanding and thoroughly analyze the perspectives of parental involvement practices in the high school that is being studied.

Stake (1995) and Yin (1994) identify six sources of evidence that can strengthen a case study. The evidence includes documents, archival records, interviews, direct

observation, participant-observation and physical artifacts. However, this study used documents such as newsletters and interviews in addition to a survey that identified the perceptions, practices and barriers of parental involvement. Detailed information will be provided on the above methods in the data collection and analysis section of this chapter.

In utilizing both qualitative and quantitative research to conduct this study, it is believed that the results from one method can help develop the other method. Additionally, utilizing both is the “most effective mode of reaching truth” (Newman & Benz, 1998, p. 10). Thus, one method can be merged with the other method to provide new ideas into different levels of analysis and the methods can serve a larger purpose to advocate for marginalized groups (Greene, Caracellis & Graham, 1989; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Mertens, 2003).

Qualitative research allows the researcher to perform an in-depth investigation regarding the problems with parental involvement at a suburban high school. The researcher utilized a set of follow-up, open-ended questions (Appendix E) in the form of interviews in a natural setting with a random sample of teachers and parents for further clarification of responses from the survey. Additionally, the researcher gathered written communication materials and conducted a document analysis. The researcher reviewed the materials and looked for trends in parental involvement practices in the school.

Quantitative research allowed the researcher to collect numerical data through an item analysis of the survey questions. The researcher administered a cross-sectional survey to a purposeful sample of teachers at a high school and distributed to parents of randomly selected high school students. The purpose of the survey was to collect

information from both groups that will describe opinions, attitudes and practices of parental involvement at the high school utilizing a rating scale.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to guide this study. Hare (2004) states that quantitative research is “focused on summary characterizations and statistical explanations” while “qualitative research offers complex descriptions and tries to explicate webs of meanings” (p. 5). Thus, quantitative research provided a more limited view of parental involvement in the high school while qualitative research will lead to further explanations and clarifications of the perceptions, barriers and practices of parental involvement.

Gay, Mills and Airasian (2006) offer the following characteristics of qualitative methodology:

The study addressed the levels of parental involvement through an in depth analysis of the following:

1. Research involves the collection of narrative and visual data in a natural, nonmanipulated setting.
2. The focus of the research involves individual and person-to-person interactions.
3. Researchers avoid making premature assumptions or decisions and are open to alternative explanations.
4. The data for qualitative research is analyzed inductively.
5. Research includes clear and detailed descriptions of the study that involves the voices of the participants and the researcher’s role, biases and preferences concerning the study.
6. The researcher must be aware of their responsibility to obtain informed consent from the participants and ensure they are treated ethically.

In utilizing the above characteristics, the researcher was able to conduct a research study in a natural setting while examining the data in a thorough manner to formulate a conclusion regarding parental involvement in the school and make recommendations to increase parental involvement and assess strategies that are appropriate for increasing communication between parents and teachers.

Additionally, the researcher gathered additional information from participants who volunteer to participate in a follow-up interview. After the data was collected, the researcher did not make assumptions concerning the relationships of the data, but continued to collect additional evidence. The researcher began to look for common themes and patterns amongst the data that was collected from the surveys, interviews and documents. Thus, it is believed that a stronger foundation for inductive analysis can be discovered through the use of a variety of data collected (Gay et al., 2006). Additionally, the researcher was able to produce a detailed report by utilizing the voices of the participants.

### Population and Sampling

There is a tremendous amount of research that focuses on parental involvement in the elementary school setting as well as particular racial groups; however, the problem is very much prevalent in the high school setting across diverse schools (Annunziata et al., 2006). In order for the researcher to gain a greater understanding of the barriers contributing to the lack of parental involvement in high schools and to obtain more accurate information, the researcher conducted the case study at Achievement High

School, a diverse high school with varying levels of parental involvement that is located in a suburban area in Georgia.

This high school provided an effective case study because it comprises of high school grades nine through twelve, it has varying demographics of cultural, racial and socioeconomic groups and it currently implements three or more of Epstein's (1992) types of parental involvement. Thus, gathering the perspectives of both teachers and parents in this school provided an opportunity to learn more about the current parental involvement process and determine the needed aspects to foster change.

#### *District and School Description*

The Georgia public school district described in this study has 110 schools and educational facilities that are separated into clusters in each jurisdiction. The district serves an estimated 151,000 students ranging from grades Pre-Kindergarten through grade 12; in 66 elementary schools, 20 middle schools, 17 high schools, and seven additional educational facilities. With the rapid increase in students, the district is preparing to open an additional four elementary schools, five middle schools, and two high schools in August 2009. Achievement High School (AHS) is 1 of the 17 high schools in the school district that serves ninth through twelfth-grades. The school has been open for over 20 years and still maintains a reputation of academic excellence. AHS has received numerous rewards including the recognition of the Georgia School of Excellence and School of the Year.

#### *Student Demographics*

The Achievement High School (AHS) has approximately 2,100 students enrolled according to the March 2007 Full-time Equivalent (FTE) count. Approximately 33% of

the students are classified as economically disadvantaged, 11% with disabilities, and 3% English Language Learners. The student population consists of 60% Black, 7% Hispanic, 26% White students with other racial groups less than 7%. Approximately 1,066 of the students are female and the remaining 1,020 are males (Georgia DOE, 2007).

### *Staff Demographics*

The staff at AHS consists of one principal, eight assistant principals, six guidance counselors, two technology professionals, one school safety agent, two media specialists, 54 individuals providing non-instructional services, and 131 teachers. The teaching staff includes approximately 42 teachers with zero to five years of teaching experience; 32 teachers with six to ten years of teaching experience; 15 teachers with 11 to 15 years of teaching experience; 21 teachers with 16 to 20 years of teaching experience; 10 teachers with 21 to 25 years of teaching experience; and 11 teachers with 26 or more years of teaching experience. Approximately 70% of the teaching staff holds a master's degree or higher.

### *Participants*

The participants in this study can only serve as a small representation of the population. Thus, out of 131 teachers, 95 returned their surveys. Approximately 150 parents were given surveys and 130 returned a completed survey. Five teachers and seven parents were interviewed utilizing a set of follow-up open-ended questions. Two of the teachers were interviewed in their classrooms while the other three completed and emailed open-ended responses to the researcher. Two parents were interviewed by phone and the remaining five parents emailed their responses to the researcher. Thereby, the

researcher interviewed seven parents and five teachers and utilized 8-10 open-ended questions.

### Instrumentation

Three instruments were used to conduct this study. The survey instrument that was used in this study is a modification of a questionnaire developed by Epstein, Connors-Tadros, and Salinas (1993) in which they conducted a study of parental involvement in high schools. Additionally, the instrument was adapted by Dlamini (1999) and DeBruhl (2006). The first survey (Appendix B) is entitled *High School and Family Partnerships: Parent Survey* which was designed to gather data regarding parents' perceptions regarding parental involvement in the school, parental involvement practices, barriers with parental involvement and family demographics (Epstein et al., 1993). The second survey (Appendix D), entitled *High School and Family Partnerships: Teacher Survey* which was designed to gather data regarding the teachers' perceptions of the importance of family involvement, present practices of involvement by the teacher and by the school, estimates of parents' involvement and responsibilities, teaching experiences, personal and school demographics (1993). The researcher chose to utilize the surveys because of the relevance of the study. Initial contact was made with Epstein et al. on August 15, 2007 to request permission to utilize their instrument. A written letter of permission was received on August 22, 2007 to utilize and adapt their surveys. The instrument was modified to suit the participants that were involved in this study.

The last instrument is a set of follow-up interview questions that were derived from the previously described survey instrument. The teacher interview questions



(Appendix E) consisted of eight open-ended questions that relate to the teacher's experiences with parental involvement at AHS. Additionally, the parent interview questions (Appendix F) consisted of 10 open-ended questions that relate to the parent's experiences at AHS.

### Reliability and Validity

This survey instrument has been widely used in research studies involving parental involvement; however, Epstein et al., (1993) provide information pertaining to its validity. It is reported that reliability coefficients are measured by using internal consistency. The internal consistency utilizes Cronbach's alpha due to many Likert-type items. The reliabilities ranged from  $\alpha=.44$  to  $\alpha=.91$  on the teacher and parent scales, which indicates their value for research (1993).

### Data Collection

The researcher utilized data collection methods outlined in both quantitative and qualitative research to conduct this study. The researcher met with the principal at Achievement High School on February 28, 2008 to explain the purpose and goals of the study and to request permission from the principal to conduct the study. Written permission was received on February 29, 2008. The principal requested that the researcher present the research study to the entire leadership team during a School Leadership Team meeting. The researcher presented the study to the team on March 4, 2008 in which she discussed the procedures as to how the study was conducted.

After receiving approval from the dissertation committee, Capella University and the Institutional Review Board, the researcher notified the principal of AHS and scheduled an appointment to administer the study during department meetings. Additionally, an informative letter accompanied parent surveys and was distributed via the students to their parents on April 21, 2008. The letter briefly explained the purpose of the study and the benefits of participating in the study. Additionally, the researcher included an assurance of confidentiality of the information disclosed. The parents were given five working days to complete and return their surveys. The researcher reiterated that the responses would remain confidential.

The researcher distributed surveys to the department chairs along with directions for completion of the surveys. The department chairs administered the surveys to the teachers during their April 22 department meeting. The researcher monitored the process and collected all surveys after each meeting.

Additionally, the researcher interviewed five teachers and seven parents in a natural setting using follow-up interview questions while the remaining teacher and parent responses were emailed to the researcher. Each interview took approximately 10 minutes. In order to obtain participants for the interviews, the researcher included a section on the surveys in which the participants could include whether or not they wanted to be contacted for an individual interview. If the participants agreed to the interview, there was a detachable sheet where they could include their contact information. The researcher contacted all participants, verbally confirmed that they were still interested in participating in an interview and scheduled appointments to either meet with the

participants individually or to find the most convenient method for the participants to complete their responses.

Also, the researcher collected documents such as newsletters that were mailed home to the parents throughout the entire school year.

### Data Analysis

The survey data was coded and analyzed using SPSS, Version 15.0 for Windows. The teachers' and parents' responses to the survey items were summarized via descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and modes. Therefore, all four of the research questions were addressed via the use of descriptive summaries of the participants' responses to the relevant items. Additionally, the researcher transcribed audiotapes from the interviews into a Microsoft Word document. The researcher also completed a document analysis of communication documents such as newsletters that were mailed home to parents. The researcher reviewed the materials and looked for trends in parental involvement practices in the school and applied pattern coding to analyze the qualitative data.

The researcher began reviewing the raw text from the interviews and documents and reduced it to text that is more relevant. Thereafter, the researcher examined repeating ideas with similar words or phrases within the text. The researcher evaluated the repetition of ideas to determine and analyze themes that produced theoretical constructs. The theoretical constructs were then developed into a theoretical narrative which will summarize the research concerns (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

In order to triangulate the data, each response question will be addressed by presenting the quantitative results as well as the qualitative results. Therefore, the results for all four research questions included a descriptive analysis based on the survey items, a thematic analysis based on the qualitative data and a narrative that integrates the two data sources. Tables and charts were constructed in order to present the data analysis findings, when applicable.

### Ethical Considerations

During this study, the researcher remained objective by eliminating personal biases and focusing on the facts as surveys were collected and interviews were conducted and the information was analyzed. The identity of the participants and their individual responses remained confidential. The results were reported by including only the demographical information. Additionally, the actual school's name has been fictionalized to maintain complete confidentiality.

### Limitations of the Study

The following limitations are applicable to this study:

1. Since the study focused on a small sample, it may be difficult to apply the influence of parental involvement to the general population of students.
2. The study focused on a specific group of parents and teachers who may be involved in different situations and therefore may not be able to correctly identify which aspects of parental involvement can apply to others who are involved with the same school and who may have different experiences.
3. The study was conducted during the spring and summer of the 2007-2008 school year and is not applicable to previous or subsequent parents or teachers.

4. Parents and teachers may not give honest and accurate responses because the researcher is employed at the school.

### Summary

Chapter 3 described the research methodology used in conducting this study. It included a research design, population and sampling, instrumentation, reliability and validity, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

## CHAPTER 4. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The goal of this study was to examine parent and teacher perceptions pertaining to parental involvement via the use of both quantitative and qualitative data sources. Of particular interest were parents' and teachers' perceptions regarding barriers to parental involvement, parents' perceptions regarding the impact of parental involvement on student performance and the role of parents in education, and parents' perceptions regarding school and teacher related practices that encourage parent involvement.

The goal of this chapter is to present the quantitative and qualitative data analysis findings in order to address the following research questions:

1. What are the perceived barriers, if any, that teachers identify regarding the lack of parental involvement?
2. What are the perceived barriers, if any, that parents identify regarding the lack of parental involvement?
3. What are the perceptions of parents who actively participate in their child's educational studies and school as compared to parents who do not actively participate in their child's educational studies and school?
4. What are the school factors that parents identify that may encourage parental involvement?

The remainder of this chapter discusses the data analysis procedures, the parent and teacher demographic characteristics, the results for each research question and concludes with a summary section that integrates the findings across the four research questions.

## Data Analysis Procedures

The survey data was entered into an Excel spreadsheet and uploaded into SPSS (Version 15.0 for Windows) where it was coded and analyzed. The survey items were based on a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from strongly agree, to strongly disagree. The items were coded such that a value of five was assigned to responses of strongly agree, four to agree, three to neutral, two to disagree and one to strongly disagree. Therefore based on this coding scheme, higher values on Part I and II of the survey were associated with more positive perceptions while higher values on Part III were indicative of more negative ratings (i.e. stronger agreement that the barrier exists).

All of the teachers' and parents' responses to the survey items were analyzed via descriptive statistics such as percentages, means, modes and standard deviations. In addition, the items in each section of the survey were averaged to create an overall survey score for Part I, Part II and Part III of the survey. Descriptive statistics were computed for these overall survey scores and correlations were computed in order to examine the relationship between parental involvement perceptions, parental involvement practices and parental involvement barriers. Pearson correlation was chosen due to the parametric nature of the overall survey scores; interval level and continuous in nature (Cronk, 2006 & Pyrczak, 2006). Tables and charts were constructed when applicable.

Finally, in order to triangulate the data, each research question was addressed using both data collection methods. Therefore, the results for all four research questions include a descriptive analysis based on the survey items and a narrative that integrates the survey and interview responses. The researcher began reviewing the raw text from the interviews and documents and reduced it to text that is more relevant. Thereafter, the

researcher examined repeating ideas with similar words or phrases within the text. The researcher evaluated the repetition of ideas to determine and analyze themes that produced theoretical constructs. Quotes from the interviews were used in some instances in order to support conclusions made by the researcher.

### Sample Demographics

This section begins with a description of the school, students and staff followed by the demographical characteristics of the parents and teachers who were involved in the study.

#### *School Description*

Achievement High School (AHS) is 1 of the 17 high schools in the school district that serves ninth through twelfth-grades. The school has been open for over 20 years and still maintains a reputation of academic excellence. AHS has received numerous rewards including the recognition of the Georgia School of Excellence and School of the Year.

#### *Student Description*

The school has approximately 2,100 students enrolled according to the March 2007 Full-time Equivalent (FTE) count. Approximately 33% of the students are classified as economically disadvantaged, 11% with disabilities, and 3% English Language Learners. The student population consists of 60% Black, 7% Hispanic, 26% White students with other racial groups less than 7%. Approximately 1,066 of the students are female and the remaining 1,020 are males. (Georgia DOE, 2007).

#### *Staff Description*

The staff at AHS consists of one principal, eight assistant principals, six guidance counselors, two technology professionals, one school safety agent, two media specialists,



54 individuals providing non-instructional services, and 131 teachers. The teaching staff includes approximately 42 teachers with zero to five years of teaching experience; 32 teachers with six to ten years of teaching experience; 15 teachers with 11 to 15 years of teaching experience; 21 teachers with 16 to 20 years of teaching experience; 10 teachers with 21 to 25 years of teaching experience; and 11 teachers with 26 or more years of teaching experience. Approximately 70% of the teaching staff holds a Masters Degree or higher. However, not all of the teachers participated in this study. Out of 131 teachers, only 95 participated in the study. Additionally, 150 parents were given surveys and 130 returned a completed survey. Five teachers and seven parents were interviewed utilizing a set of follow-up open-ended questions. Two of the teachers were interviewed in their classrooms while the other three completed and emailed open-ended responses to the researcher. Two parents were interviewed by phone and the remaining five parents emailed their responses to the researcher. Thereby, the researcher interviewed seven parents and five teachers and utilized 8-10 open-ended questions.

#### *Parent Sample Demographic Summary*

The response rate for the parents was 86.7% and therefore these results are based on only those parents who responded. The parent sample was primarily female as indicated in Figure 1. However, six of the participants did not respond to this item.

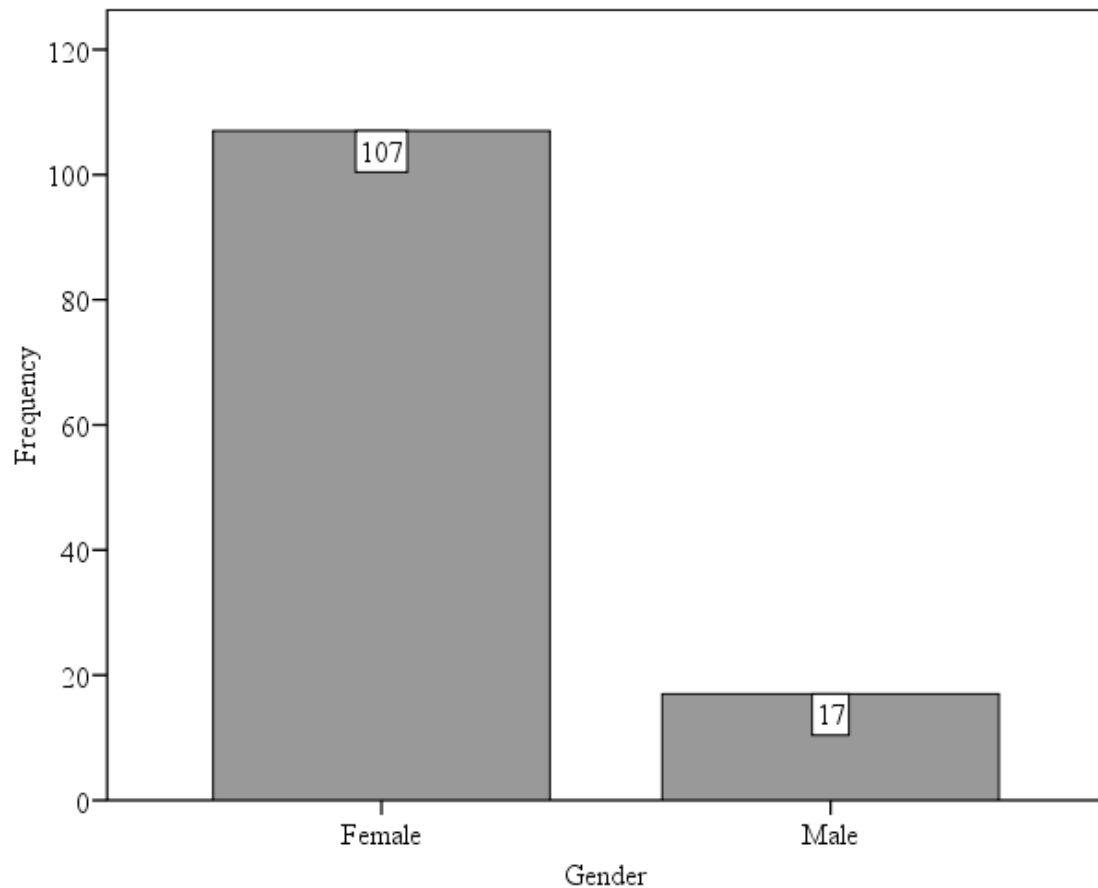


Figure 1. Parent sample gender

According to the summarized parents' demographic survey responses in Figure 2, the most common level of parental educational attainment was a high school diploma or the equivalent followed by a bachelor's degree and then a master's degree. Only six parents did not complete high school and only three earned a doctoral degree.

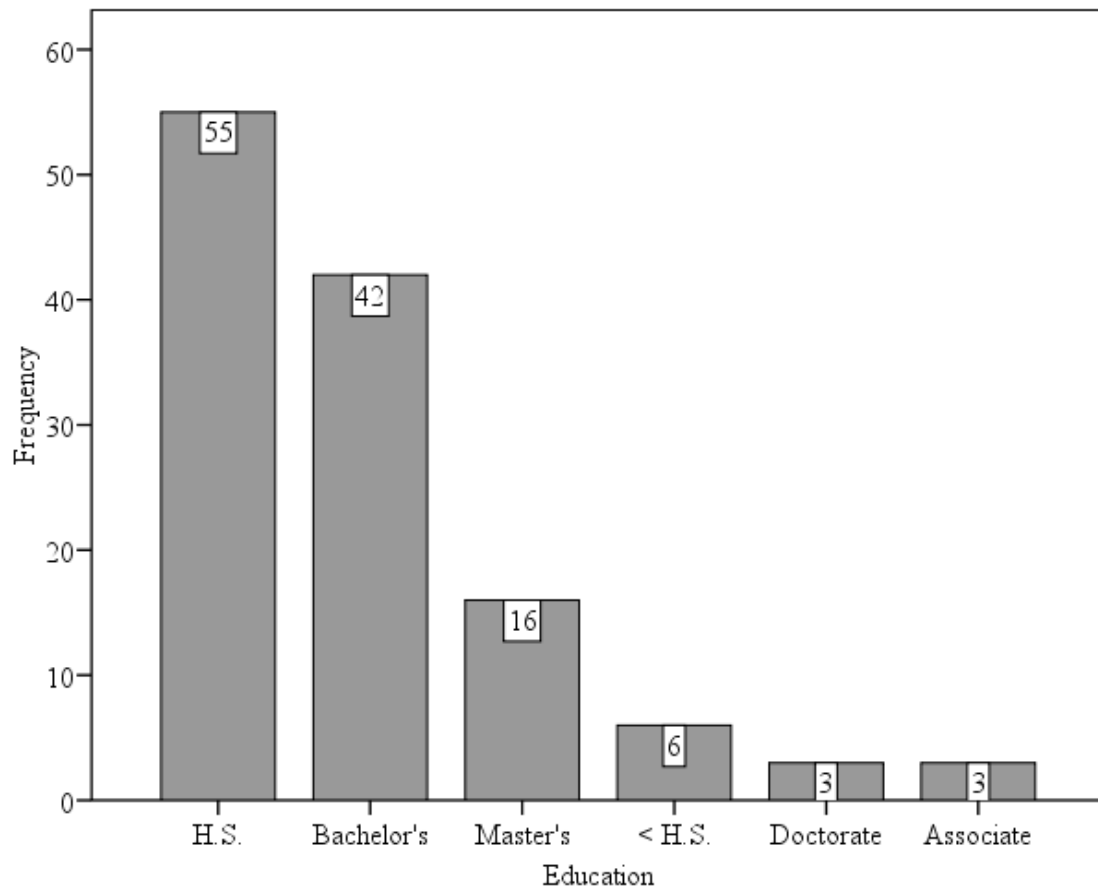


Figure 2. Educational attainment of parent sample

The parents in the study were also asked about the number of children that they had. Figure 3 indicates that although there were some parents who had more than four children (up to 10 children), the most common response was to have two children followed by three, four and then one. The majority of the parent in the sample had three or fewer children.

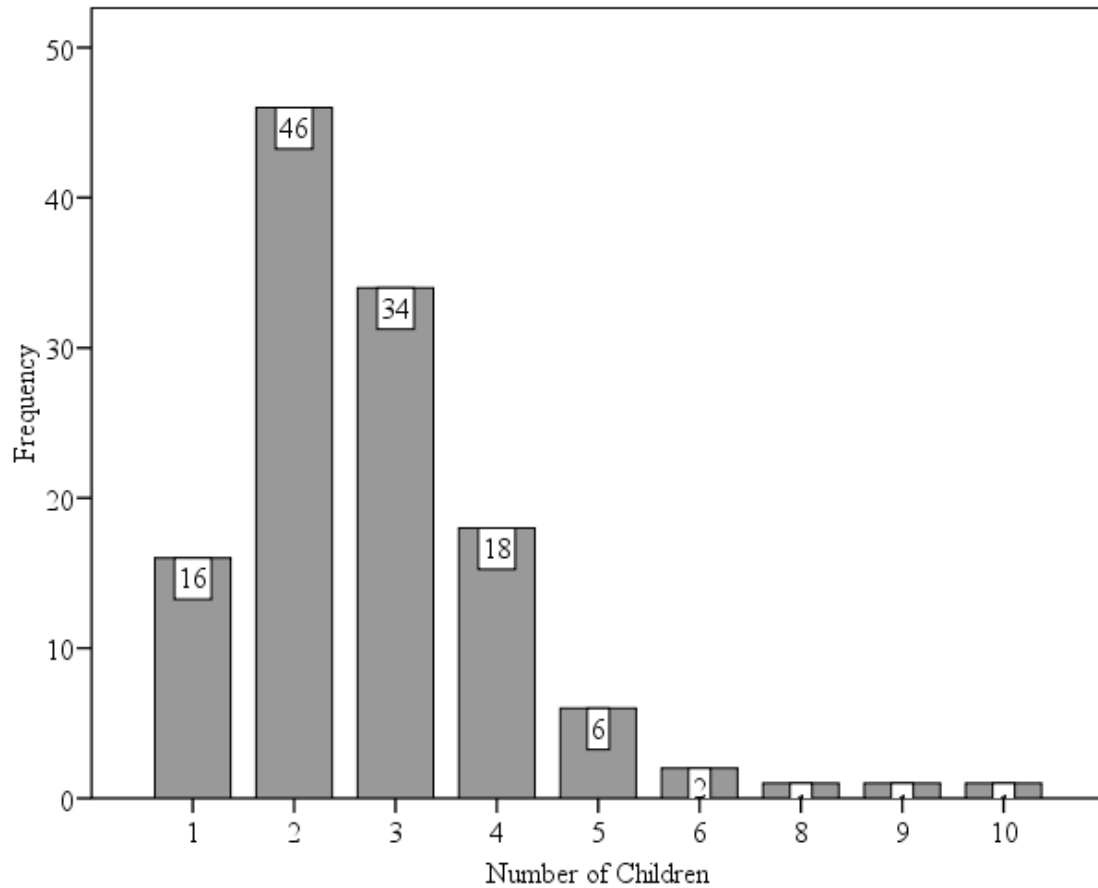


Figure 3. Total number of children

In addition to the number of children, parents were asked how many children that they had attending the school in this study. The results in Figure 4 indicate that the majority of the parents in this study had only one child at the school at the time of the study. A total of 28 parents had more than one child at the school. Only three of the parents in the study had three children at the school and none of the parents had more than three children in the school.

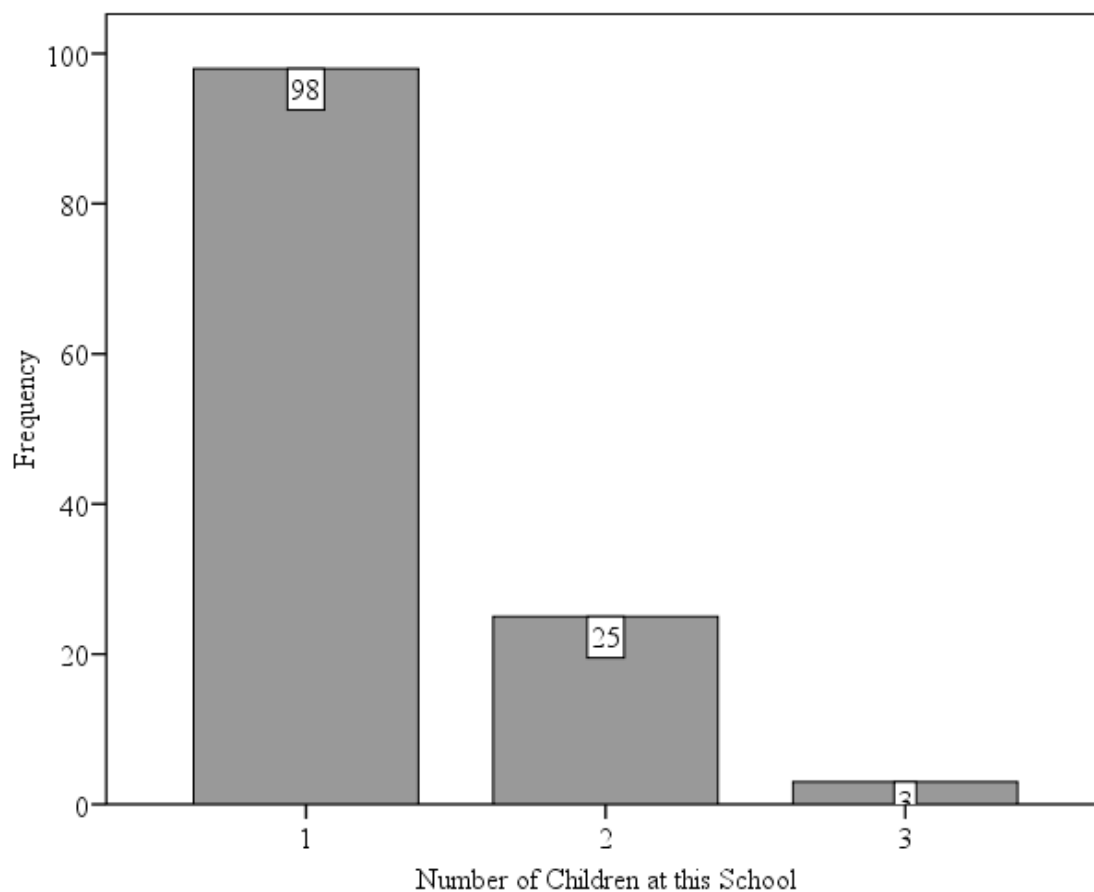


Figure 4. Number of children at this school

Parents were also asked the grade level of their oldest child. The results in Figure 5 indicate that the most common grade level was ninth grade. In fact, the total number of children that fell into each grade level declined as grade level increased. Therefore parents were least likely to indicate that their oldest child was in 12<sup>th</sup>-grade.

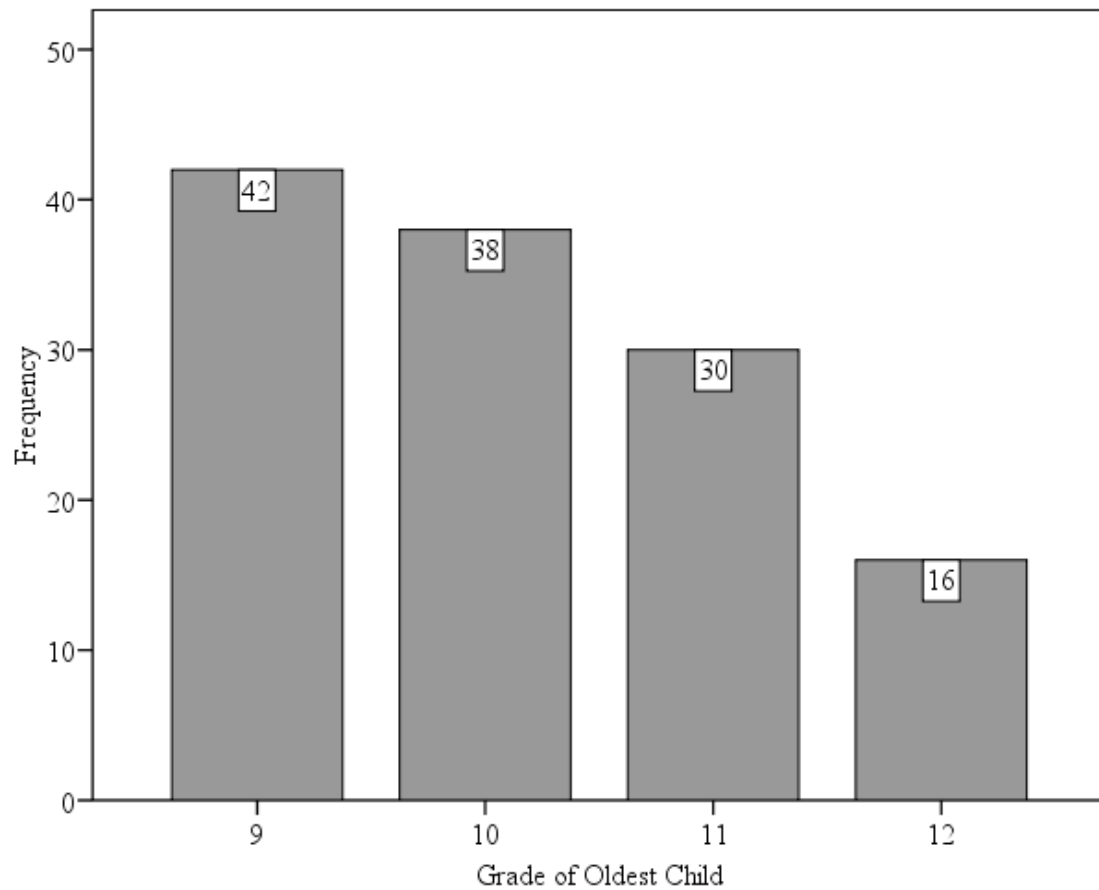


Figure 5. Grade of oldest child

Finally, the age of the parent sample is summarized in Table 1. The results in Table 1 indicate that there was a wide range in age (29 years to 71 years) with a sample average of 43.19 years. However, 12 of the parents did not indicate their age on the survey.

Table 1. Age of Parent Sample

<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
118	29	71	43.19	6.06

The parent demographic characteristics in this sample were diverse. The parents in this study differed substantially with regard to their educational attainment, their number of children, the grade level of their oldest child and their age.

*Teacher Sample Demographic Summary*

The response rate for the teachers was 72.5% and therefore these results are based on only those who responded. The gender distribution for the sample of teachers is illustrated in Figure 6. The results in Figure 6 indicate that the majority of the teacher sample was female. However, there were still a relatively large number of male teachers in the study.

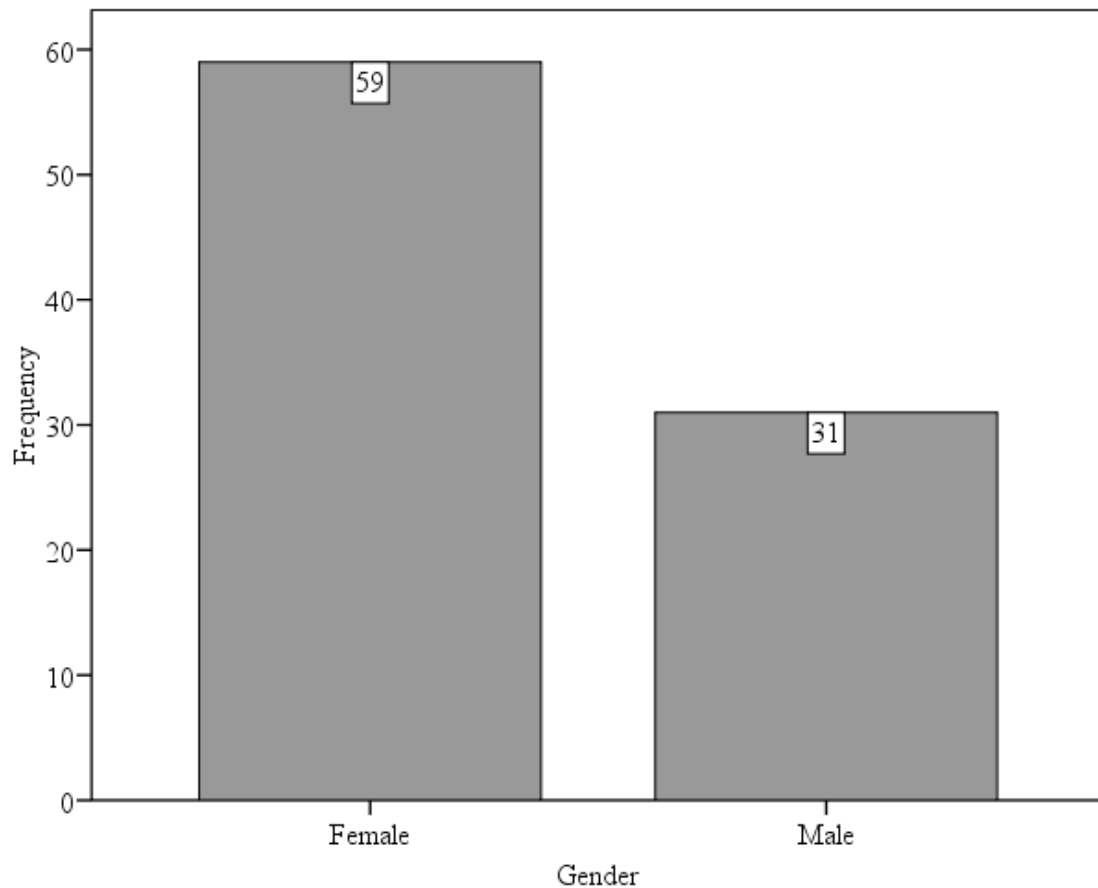


Figure 6. Teacher sample gender

The summary of the educational attainment for the teacher sample in Figure 7 indicates that the most common educational attainment level was a master's degree followed by a bachelor's degree. However, there were several teachers with either a specialist degree or a doctoral degree. Therefore the teachers in this sample of educators tended to be well educated.



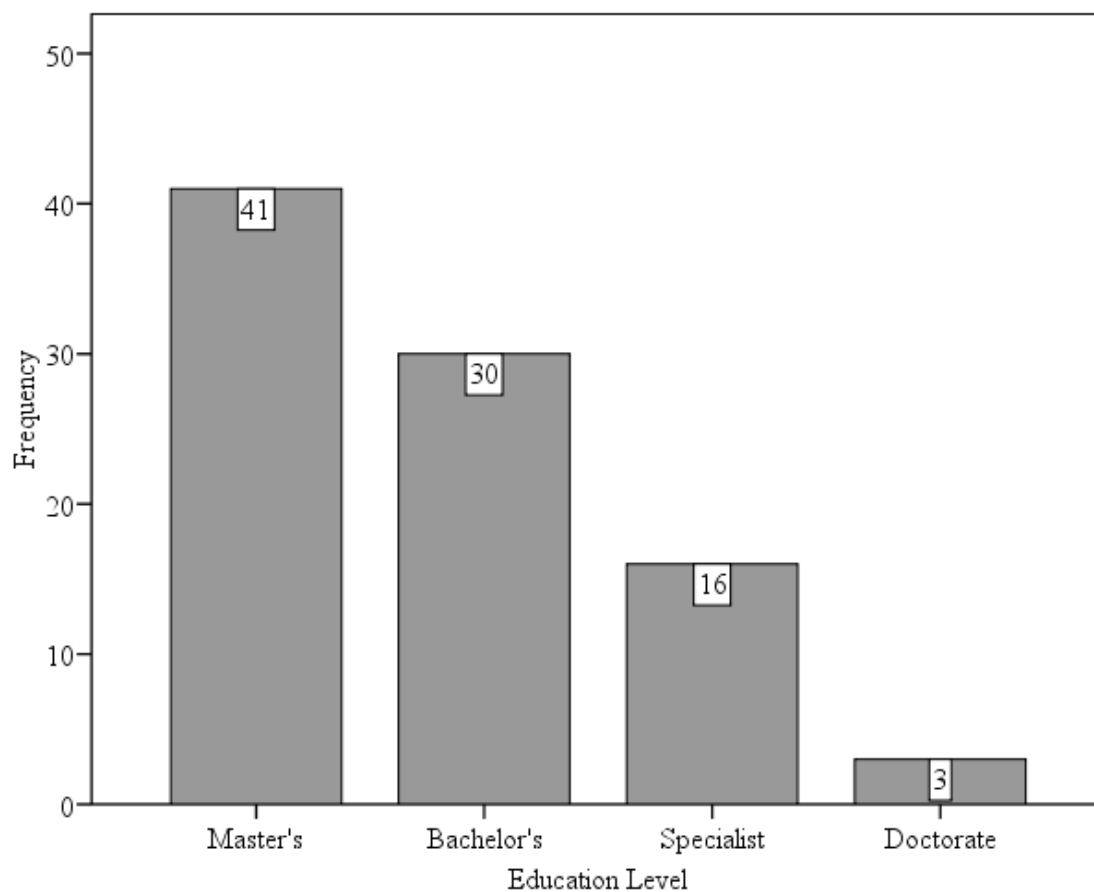


Figure 7. Educational attainment of teacher sample

The results in Figure 8 indicate that teachers were most likely to say that they teach all grade levels (i.e. ninth through 12<sup>th</sup>-grades). However, there were several who taught only one grade level and a few who taught more than one, but not all four.

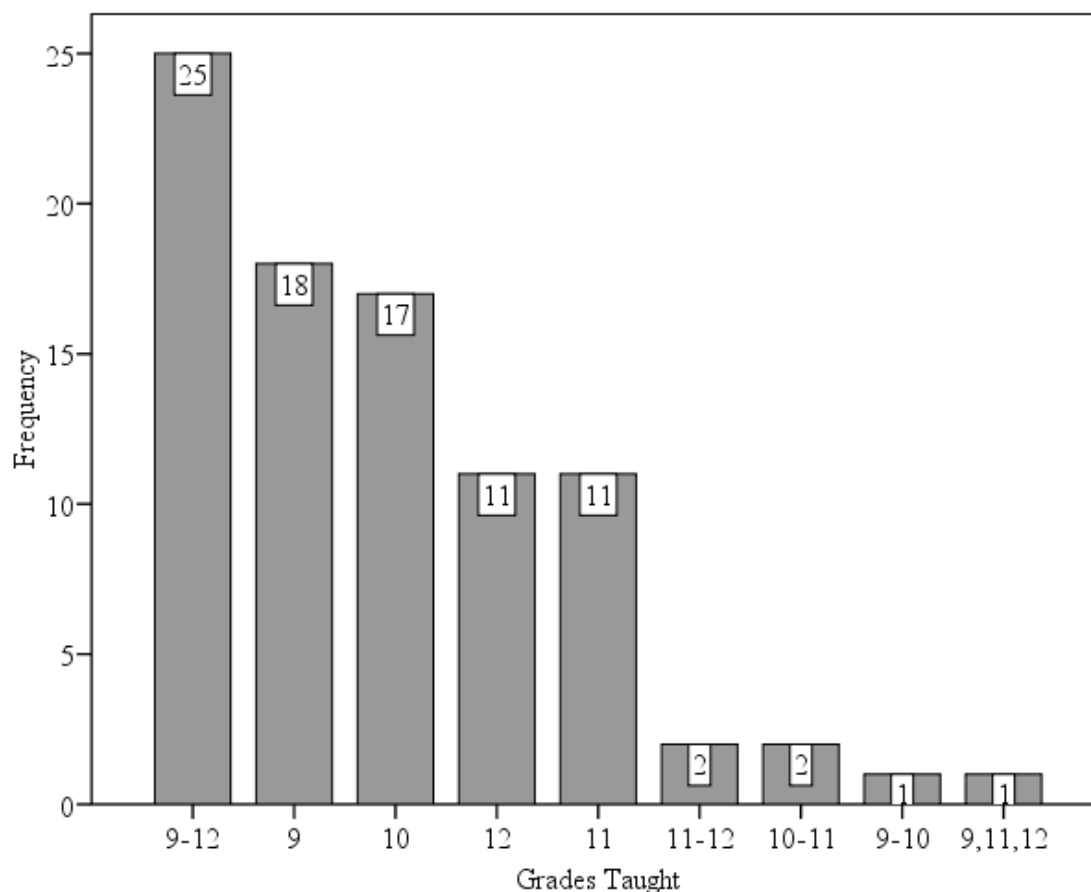


Figure 8. Grade levels taught

The teachers' number of years of experience and age are summarized in Table 2. The results in Table 2 indicate that there was a very wide range with regard to teaching experience and teacher age. The average number of years of teaching experience for the teacher sample was 10.62 years. However, the number of years experience ranged from just one year to 38 years of teaching experience. The average age was 38.30 years. However, teacher age ranged from 22 years to 69 years of age.

Table 2. Number of Years of Experience and Teacher Age

Source	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Experience	86	1	38	10.62	8.51
Age	89	22	69	38.80	11.28

The teacher demographic results indicate that the teacher sample was also diverse. Teachers differed with regard to their educational attainment, grade levels taught, teaching experience and age.

#### Research Question 1

The first research question examined the perceived barriers, if any, that teachers identified regarding the lack of parental involvement. In order to address this research question, the teachers' responses to Part III of the survey and select interview responses were assessed. The teachers' survey responses to the items on the survey pertaining to parental involvement barriers are summarized in Table 3.

The results in Table 3 indicate that teachers tended to agree with all of the barriers except that parents do not feel welcomed in school. However, the minimum and maximum values indicate that teachers' perceptions ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Table 3. Parental Involvement Barriers: Teacher Perceptions

Source	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>SD</i>
Parents don't know how to talk to teen	93	3.73	4.00	4	0.85
Parents are too involved with own work	92	3.82	4.00	4	0.89
Parents don't know school policies/procedures	93	3.76	4.00	4	0.85
Language barriers	93	3.99	4.00	4	0.83
Lack of transportation	93	3.48	4.00	4	1.04
Parents do not feel welcomed in school	93	2.56	2.00	2	0.91
Parent work schedules	80	3.83	4.00	4	0.81
Lack of child care options	93	3.44	4.00	4	0.97

Table 4 provides a more in-depth analysis of teachers' perceptions relative to parental involvement barriers. Table 4 indicates the percentage of teachers who strongly disagreed to strongly agreed with each of the listed items.

The results in Table 4 indicate that teachers were most likely to disagree that parents do not feel welcomed in the school but were most likely to agree with the remainder of the barriers to parental involvement. Teachers were most likely to agree or strongly agree that language barriers and work schedules limit parental involvement.

Table 4. Percentage by Category: Teacher Perceptions of Parental Involvement Barriers

Source	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>
Parents don't know how to talk to teen	93	0.0	8.6	26.9	47.3	17.2
Parents are too involved with own work	92	1.1	8.7	17.4	53.3	19.6
Parents don't know school policies/procedures	93	0.0	12.9	11.8	61.3	14.0
Language barriers	93	0.0	7.5	11.8	54.8	25.8
Lack of transportation	93	3.2	17.2	21.5	44.1	14.0
Parents do not feel welcomed in school	93	7.5	48.4	26.9	15.1	2.2
Parent work schedules	80	0.0	8.8	16.3	58.8	16.3
Lack of child care options	93	3.2	14.0	29.0	43.0	10.8

The overall scores (i.e. average across all items in this section of the survey) indicate that teachers tended to agree more than disagree that the listed barriers negatively affect parental involvement.

Table 5. Overall Parental Involvement Barriers: Teacher Perceptions

<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
95	2.13	5.00	3.58	0.50

The teachers' overall scores for Part III of the survey, illustrated in Figure 9, indicate that the distribution was fairly normal with teachers tended to show overall agreement more so than disagreement.

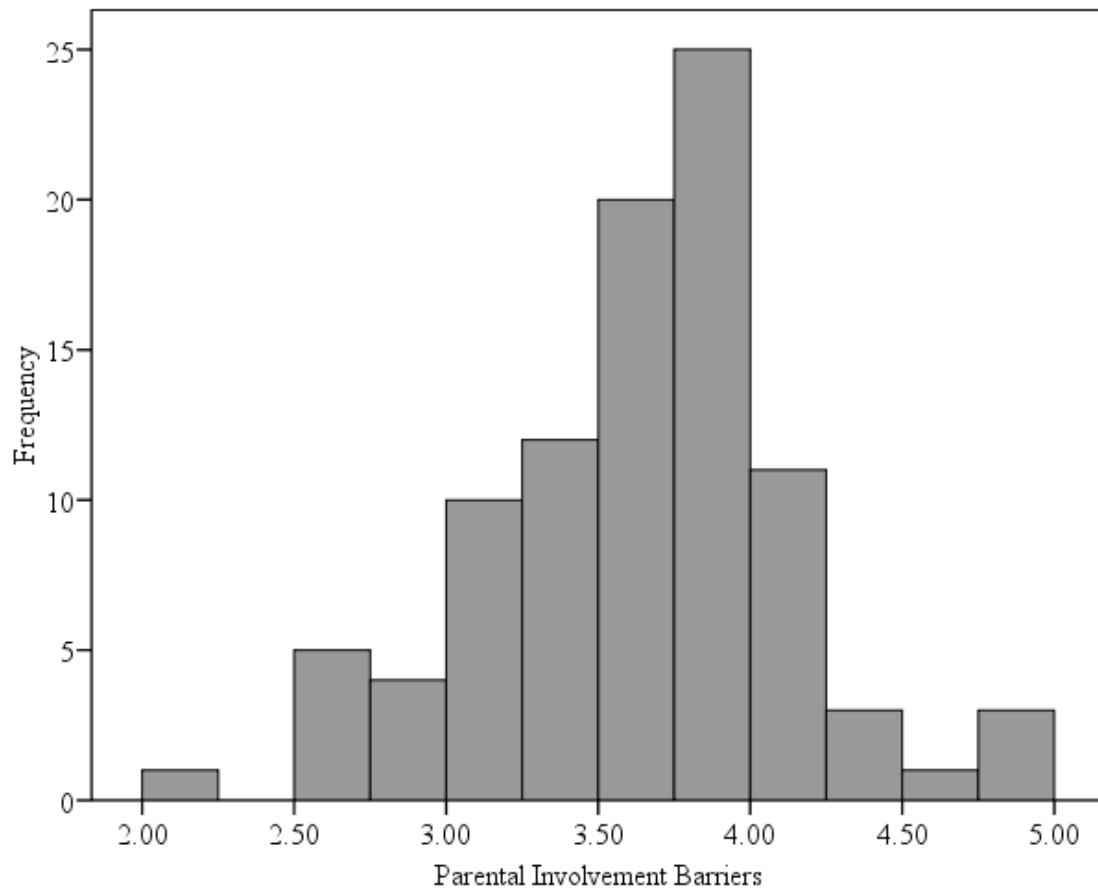


Figure 9. Parental involvement barriers: Teacher distribution of scores

#### *Teacher Interview Data Results: Parental Involvement Barriers*

*Lack of current contact information.* The teacher interview responses suggest that one of the biggest limitations to getting parents involved was a lack of current contact information. Some of the parents moved and did not provide updated information. In fact, this factor was mentioned by all five of the teachers interviewed:

Well, not having the right phone number is one of the main things or not having an email address.

One of the biggest issues is that the phone numbers and emails that I get at the beginning of the year have been changed or disconnected and the child doesn't know what the new email address is and the addresses have changed and I just don't know how to get in touch with the parents beyond getting the information from the child.

I wish that some of the parents would take more responsibility as parents and provide the school with updated contact information.

I have even tried to call some of the parents on their jobs and I get information like they no longer work there or they do not know anyone by that name.

I really don't understand why parents are not willing to provide the school and teachers with more current contact information. What if there is an emergency and we need to contact them?

*Language barriers.* Another reason for a lack of parental involvement was language barriers, which was also indicated as a primary barrier on the survey. For example, one teacher number one explained "Actually, I have had two or three students like that and I wasn't able to communicate because of the English barrier." Teacher number three stated "I have to ask some of my students to call their own parents and translate the information for me." Additional comments from the interviews include:

It is extremely difficult to communicate with some of the parents because they do not speak English and I do not speak their language.

At times, I often wonder if being multilingual is what it will take in order for teachers to effectively communicate with parents.

*Previous negative experiences with teachers.* Finally, teacher number two indicated that some parents do not get involved due to previous negative experiences with teachers. The teacher explained that "I can't get through to some of the parents because of previous bad experiences that they had with teachers which cause them to become

defensive.” “Additionally, they believe that teachers blame them for their child’s bad behavior or lack of achievement.”

The results for research question 1 indicate that teachers believe that there are many barriers to parental involvement. However, as indicated by the survey, the two main barriers according to teachers include language barriers and parent work schedules. The one barrier in which teachers were most likely to disagree was that most parents do not feel welcomed when they enter the school building. Additionally, the teacher interviews indicated that the main barriers were lack of current contact information, language barriers and previous negative experiences.

## Research Question 2

The second research question examined parents’ perceptions relating to parental involvement barriers. In order to address this research question, the parents’ responses to Part II of the survey and select interview responses were examined. The parents’ summarized responses to the survey items are provided in Table 6.

The results in Table 6 indicate that parents were most likely to disagree or strongly disagree as indicated by their modes. One exception to this general trend emerged with regard to parent work schedules with parents tending to agree that work schedules limit parental involvement. Interestingly parents rated language barriers lowest indicating that parents did not perceive language to be a barrier, although teachers rated this factor to be one of the main barriers to parental involvement.



Table 6. Parental Involvement Barriers: Parent Perceptions

Source	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>SD</i>
Parents don't know how to talk to teen	129	1.90	2.00	1	1.07
Parents are too involved with own work	129	2.71	3.00	2	1.27
Parents don't know school policies/procedures	130	2.08	2.00	2	1.10
Language barriers	130	1.55	1.00	1	0.96
Lack of transportation	130	1.61	1.00	1	0.85
Parents do not feel welcomed in school	130	1.93	2.00	1	1.02
Parent work schedules	88	2.92	3.00	4	1.34
Lack of child care options	125	1.69	1.00	1	0.96

The percentage of parents choosing each of the possible response options for the parental involvement barriers is provided in Table 7. The results in Table 7 indicate that parents were most likely to strongly disagree or disagree that knowing how to talk with their teen about schoolwork at home, being too involved in their own work, not knowing school policies or procedures, language barriers, lack of transportation, not feeling welcomed in the school and lack of child care options were barriers to parental involvement. However, parents were most likely to agree that work schedules were barriers to parental involvement.

Table 7. Percentage by Category: Parent Perceptions of Parental Involvement Barriers

Source	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>SA</i>
Parents don't know how to talk to teen	129	44.2	36.4	8.5	7.0	3.9
Parents are too involved with own work	129	20.2	28.7	21.7	19.4	10.1
Parents don't know school policies/procedures	130	35.4	38.5	11.5	11.5	3.1
Language barriers	130	66.9	20.0	6.2	4.6	2.3
Lack of transportation	130	54.6	36.2	5.4	1.5	2.3
Parents do not feel welcomed in school	130	42.3	33.1	16.2	6.2	2.3
Parent work schedules	88	19.3	22.7	17.0	28.4	12.5
Lack of child care options	125	54.4	31.2	8.8	2.4	3.2

The overall scores in Table 8 for Part III on the parent survey indicate that on average, parents disagreed that the listed barriers affect parental involvement. However, the minimum and maximum values indicate that some parents did feel that the barriers listed negatively impact parental involvement.

Table 8. Overall Parental Involvement Barriers: Parent Perceptions

Source	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Parent Barriers	130	1.00	4.17	2.01	0.63

The parents' overall scores distributed in Figure 10 indicate that the distribution was positively skewed with parents tending to disagree more so than agree, as previously indicated by Table 7. In fact, the vast majority of the parents' overall scores for Part III of the survey were below 3.00.

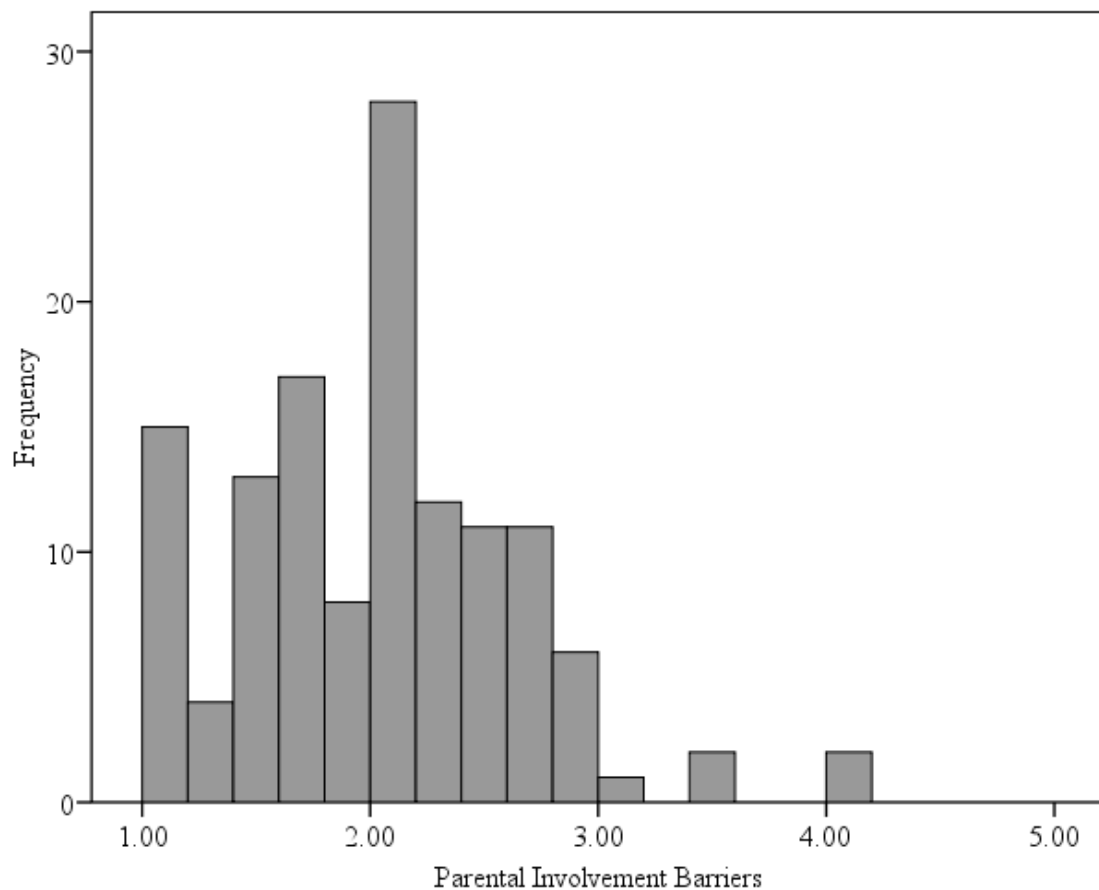


Figure 10. Parental involvement barriers: Parent distribution of scores

*Parental Involvement Barriers: Parent Perceptions*

*Negative experiences with teachers.* According to the parent interview data, barriers to communicating with teachers include negative experiences or characteristics

of some of the teachers. Many of the experiences described from some of the parents were based on previous negative experiences that they have had with teachers. For example, parent number one indicated that some teachers exhibit racist attitudes by wrongfully mislabeling black male children more so than others, which is a potential barrier that may prohibit parents from communicating with teachers. She continued to explain her logic behind the previous statement:

I can tell you when we first came to this school system about fourteen years ago, the demographics were definitely different than they are now so there were some issues we had with some of the teachers especially in the case with my son. When he was in kindergarten, he had a teacher that felt as though he was not ready to move on to the first grade. My husband and I both sat down with the teacher to hear her concerns as to why and then we went to the vice principal and of course ultimately the principal because we knew our child, there was no way we were going to allow them to hold him back based on the reasons that she gave. We came to a mutual agreement where he went to summer school that particular summer and even though every one of my children came into the system knowing how to read and write, we knew that it had a lot to do with race and labeling of black male children.

Even though this particular incident occurred when her son was in kindergarten, the parent obviously remembered this incident; however, it did not affect her level of involvement even though she cited that similar incidents may possibly deter parents from being more involved in the schools. She strongly believes that such incidents should make parents want to be more involved so they are aware of what the teachers and their children are doing in school and staying involved may possibly prevent potential failures or behavioral problems.

Parent number two indicated that some teachers become annoyed and feel challenged when parents question them, etc. She further explained that “some teachers ignore emails altogether and will only respond when the principal is included in the

email”. She continued to express that this type of behavior from teachers may cause some parents to develop negative attitudes toward the school and may discourage them from involvement. Additionally, she felt that teachers should be grateful when parents want to be involved at the high school level. This same parent also indicated that a fear of a lack of confidentiality is also a barrier to parent-teacher communication. This parent explained that she had a previous experience with a teacher who communicated what she (the parent) said to her in confidence back to her daughter who was not meant to be privy to the information. She further emphasized that she does not have confidence in the teachers because she fears that the content of their emails or phone conversations will not remain confidential.

*Parent work schedules.* Additionally, other barriers to becoming actively involved in the school were identified in the parent interviews as well. According to the parent interview responses, one common theme that emerged from all seven interviews was parent work schedules. Parent number three stated:

My office hours and travel schedule significantly impacts my ability to become more involved in the school; however, I understand that it is my responsibility to actively communicate and work with my son’s teachers to come up with a good time where we can have a phone conversation if an email will not suffice.

*Increased autonomy for high school students.* Additionally, the last four parents stated their belief that they do not need to be as involved at the high school level because their children are more responsible and do not need as much guidance once they have reached this level. This premise has significantly decreased their parental involvement. Because of this belief, it was necessary to determine if the parents actually knew what it meant to be involved. All of the parents agreed that involvement meant assisting their

children with academics, communicating with teachers, volunteering in the school and attending extracurricular events. The researcher further questioned why some believed that they should not be expected to become involved when their children are in high school. It became evident and a common response from all of the parents that they allow their children freedom and independence when they enter high school. Two of the parents even expressed that the children would become embarrassed or simply refused for their parents to be seen with them around the school even though the parents clearly stated that this should not be a sole reason for deciding not to become involved. Additionally, the parents expressed that this is a way for their children to prove that they can be trusted. They allow the children freedom and place more responsibility on them. The same two parents were extremely confident that their children were totally honest with them and provided them with information regarding their progress in school.

Also, some parents do not feel inclined to participate or be involved if their child is not a part of the event. For example, parent number one explained:

Even when we have a fine arts program, people came, they watched their child and they left so in my estimation and this is something as PTSA President, I have told parents that even though your son or daughter is in band or orchestra, we still need to support each other for each student no matter where they are working in the school or activity that they are doing.

This parent feels very strongly about parent involvement and she focuses one of her goals as PTSA President on getting parents more involved in activities that their children may not actively participate in. She feels that involvement should be a community-wide effort and that the students tend to display more positive attitudes when they see that the community supports them.

*Negative attitude regarding the school's policies and procedures.* Parent number two indicated that dissatisfaction with the school is a barrier along with a general disagreement with school policies and/or procedures. The researcher asked the parent to explain which policies and procedures that she did not agree with and she never gave a clear answer, but she simply stated "I attend some school events that occur after work hours and attend some weekend events; however, I probably will not volunteer in the school because they enforce policies that are unfair to the students."

The results to research question 2 indicate that parents do not appear to view the barriers listed on the survey as real barriers to parental involvement, on average. With regard to parent generated barriers (i.e. barriers that relate to parent actions, parent behaviors and/or parent situations), parents were most likely to view work schedules as a potential barrier, but were not likely to view language barriers as a factor limiting parental involvement. Other reasons for a lack of parental involvement, not listed on the survey, related to teacher or school factors such as parent dissatisfaction with the school's policies and procedures or unprofessional teachers and increased autonomy for the students.

### Research Question 3

The third research question examined the perceptions of parents who actively participate in their child's educational studies and school as compared to parents who do not actively participate in their child's educational studies and school. In order to address this research question, parents' responses to Part I of the survey were summarized. In addition, relationships were computed between parental involvement perceptions,

practices and barriers in order to determine if parental perceptions regarding their involvement and barriers related to their parental involvement practice perceptions. Finally, the parent interview responses were reviewed for additional information and to help triangulate the quantitative data.

The summarized results of the parents' responses to Part I of the survey are provided in Table 9. The results in Table 9 indicate that on average, the parents' perceptions were positive. Parents tended to agree to strongly agree that their involvement increased student attitudes, performance and made teachers more effective.

Table 9. Parental Involvement Perceptions: Parent Perceptions

Source	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>SD</i>
Display more positive attitudes	130	4.30	4.00	5	0.80
Teachers more effective	129	4.34	4.00	5	0.79
Students perform better daily	129	4.09	4.00	4	0.87
Most teachers prefer parents volunteer	129	3.66	4.00	4	0.96
Most teachers better able to teach	128	3.77	4.00	4	1.07
School views parents as important	129	3.97	4.00	4	0.96
Most parents want to know more	129	4.21	4.00	4	0.80
Most teachers want parents more involved	130	4.33	4.00	5	0.78
Parents & teachers appreciate each other	129	4.35	4.00	4	0.67



In addition, the results in Table 9 indicate that parents believed that the teachers want them to be involved and that the school views them as important partners in their child's education. Furthermore, parents tended to agree that parents want to know more (i.e. be more involved), teachers want parents to be more involved and parents and teachers appreciate each other when they clearly understand each other's job. Therefore, on average, the parents' perceptions were positive.

A summary of the percentage of parents who chose each possible response option for the items associated with Part I of the survey is presented in Table 10. The results in Table 10 indicate that parents were most likely to either agree or strongly agree with all of the items.

Table 10. Percentage by Category: Parent Perceptions of Parental Involvement

Source	<i>N</i>	SD	D	N	A	SA
Display more positive attitudes	130	0.8	2.3	10.0	40.0	46.9
Teachers more effective	129	1.6	0.8	7.8	41.9	48.1
Students perform better daily	129	0.8	3.9	17.1	42.6	35.7
Most teachers prefer parents volunteer	129	0.8	10.9	31.0	36.4	20.9
Most teachers better able to teach	128	3.9	8.6	21.1	39.1	27.3
School views parents as important	129	2.3	3.9	21.7	38.8	33.3
Most parents want to know more	129	0.0	4.7	9.3	46.5	39.5
Most teachers want parents more involved	130	0.0	3.1	10.0	37.7	49.2
Parents & teachers appreciate each other	129	0.0	0.8	8.5	45.7	45.0

The parents' overall scores for Part I of the survey are summarized in Table 11. The results in Table 11 indicate that overall parents held positive perceptions regarding parental involvement due to the fact that they tended to agree with the statements; however, not all parents showed overall agreement.

Table 11. Overall Parental Involvement Perceptions

<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
130	2.11	5.00	4.11	0.54

Figure 11 illustrates the parents' distribution of scores with regard to overall parental involvement perceptions. The results in Figure 11 indicate that the scores were negatively skewed with one extreme score on the left tail or low end of the distribution. However, the vast majority of the parents' overall scores were above a value of three and many were above a value of four.

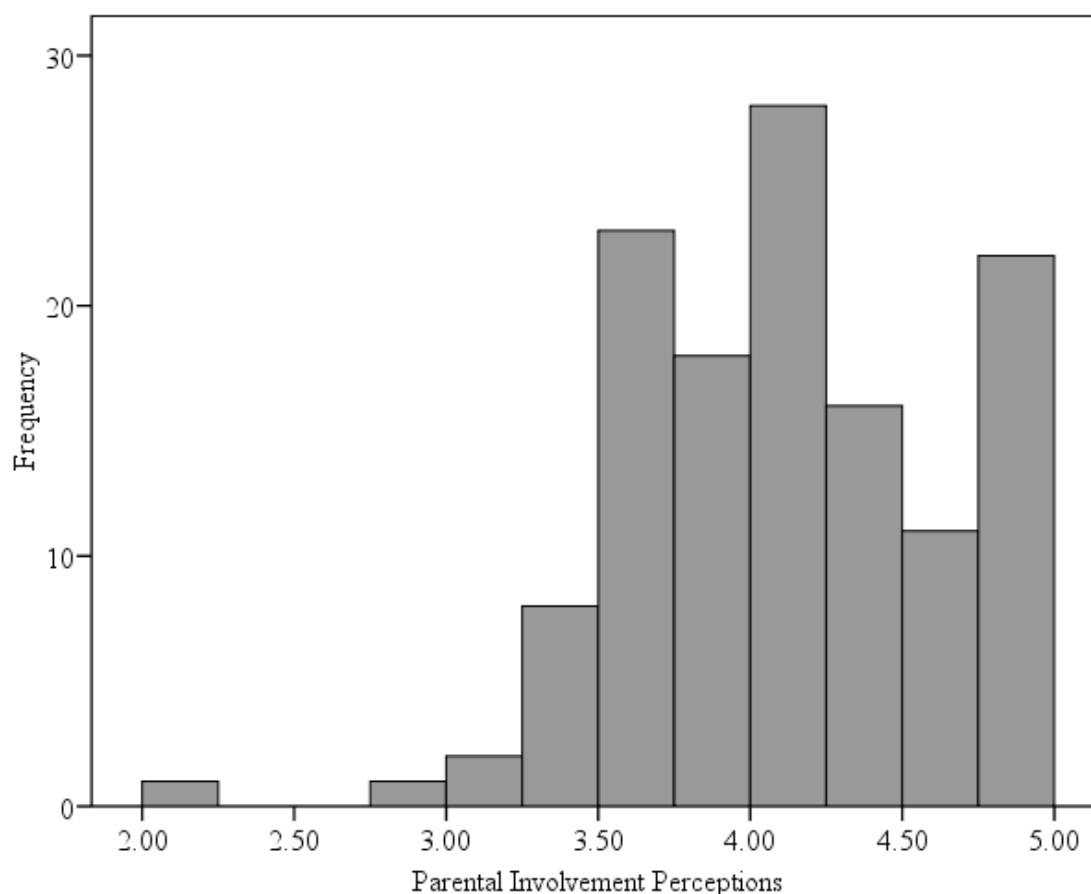


Figure 11. Parental involvement perceptions: Parent distribution of scores.

The correlation results indicate that parental involvement perceptions were positively and moderately correlated with parental involvement practices ( $r = .45$ ) indicating that the more parents agreed that they experienced such practices, the more positive their parental involvement perceptions. In other words, parents who have had experiences in which teachers apply practices intended to encourage parental involvement and who regularly communicate with them have higher parental involvement perceptions. Therefore if teachers engage parents, parents are more likely to see the importance and value of their involvement.

Another interesting finding from the correlation analysis is that a negative but weak relationship was found between parental involvement perceptions and parental involvement barriers ( $r = -.23$ ). In other words, the fewer the perceived parental involvement barriers, the more positive the parents' perceptions were regarding parental involvement. No relationship was found between parental involvement practices and parent involvement barriers ( $r = -.05$ ), which makes sense because parent generated barriers should not be related to a teacher's parental involvement practices.

#### *Parent Interview Data Results: Parental Involvement*

The parent interview data indicated that all parents interviewed displayed a unified belief that parental involvement is very important. Also, all parents interviewed believe that children perform better when parents are involved even though the last four parents have given their children increased autonomy. In fact, one of the parents explained:

When kids know that their parents are involved in what goes on in their school and when kids know that their parents are in constant contact with their teacher, they work harder. Their behavior is improved as they know that their parent and teacher are on the same page.

The first parent who was interviewed indicated that she is very actively involved in her children's school and has been from elementary school throughout. She is the PTSA president and volunteers in the classroom. The second parent interviewed indicated that her involvement has declined since she has distanced herself from the school due to a lack of satisfaction with the school. She still attends events, but is no longer very actively involved but rather characterizes herself as somewhat involved. The third parent indicated that he is somewhat involved, but plans to decrease his work hours so that he

may increase his involvement with the school. The fourth parent indicated that she is very actively involved and has stated that she plans to challenge other parents as she meets them at school activities to become more involved. The fifth parent described himself as moderately involved. He indicated that he is consistently communicates with his daughter's teachers and provides academic assistance to her at home; however, he admits that he rarely attends extracurricular events. The last two parents interviewed indicated that they are not actively involved. Both parents clearly understood the importance of being involved; however, they admitted that because of increased autonomy with their children and personal responsibilities, they were unable to do so at the present time.

The results for research question 3 indicate that parents tend to have positive perceptions of parental involvement, although not all parents share that view. When parents do not have positive perceptions, they appear to be due to negative past experiences with teachers. In fact, one of the teachers stated in the teacher interview that some parents have had negative experiences communicating with teachers in the past and indicated that one way to improve parental involvement is for teachers to become more culturally sensitive. The results also indicate that parent's who have had more positive experiences with teachers trying to engage them also have more positive parental involvement perceptions.

#### Research Question 4

The fourth and final research question examined the school factors that parents identified which may encourage parental involvement. In order to address this research question, the parents' responses from Part II of the parent survey were analyzed in

conjunction with select parent interview responses. In addition, school documents such as the school newspaper were reviewed to determine whether or not some of the factors identified by parents were evident in the school's current practices.

The parents' summarized responses to the parental involvement practice items are provided in Table 12. The results in Table 12 indicate that parents were most likely to have neutral responses or to agree with the items, although there was a wide range of parental perceptions.

Table 12. Parental Involvement Practices

Source	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>SD</i>
Send letter home with students	130	3.57	4.00	4	1.09
Provide parents with a calendar	129	3.53	4.00	4	1.22
Contact parents about problems/failures	129	3.79	4.00	4	1.07
Contact parents when teen does well/improves	130	3.29	3.00	4	1.18
Involve parents as volunteers in class	129	2.84	3.00	2	1.12
Provide ideas to help parents talk with teen	130	2.95	3.00	2	1.21
Inform parents of required skills to pass	130	3.82	4.00	4	1.10
Assign homework requiring teen-parent talk	130	3.10	3.00	3	1.08
Develop behavior/learning contracts	130	3.11	3.00	3	1.15

Overall, parents were most likely to agree that teachers inform them about the required skills needed in order to pass their courses and contact them when their children

are having problems or failing. Parents were least likely to agree that teachers provided them with opportunities to volunteer in the classroom.

The summarized responses in Table 13 indicate that parents were most likely to agree that parental involvement is encouraged by the following practices: (a) Sending letters home with students, (b) providing parents with calendars, (c) contacting parents about problems/failures, (d) contacting parents when child improves or does something well and (e) when teachers communicate the required skills necessary for students to pass courses.

Table 13. Percentage by Category: Parent Perceptions of Parental Involvement Practices

Source	<i>N</i>	SD	D	N	A	SA
Send letter home with students	130	5.4	11.5	23.1	40.8	19.2
Provide parents with a calendar	129	6.2	17.1	19.4	31.8	25.6
Contact parents about problems/failures	129	2.3	13.2	16.3	39.5	28.7
Contact parents when teen does well/improves	130	4.6	26.2	23.1	27.7	18.5
Involve parents as volunteers in class	129	10.1	33.3	26.4	22.5	7.8
Provide ideas to help parents talk with teen	130	10.0	33.8	17.7	27.7	10.8
Inform parents of required skills to pass	130	3.8	12.3	10.8	43.8	29.2
Assign homework requiring teen-parent talk	130	6.2	24.6	32.3	26.9	10.0
Develop behavior/learning contracts	130	7.7	24.6	30.0	24.6	13.1

*Parent Interview Data Results and Document Analysis: Teacher and School Practices that Encourage Parental Involvement*

*Sending letters home.* One of the practices that parents tended to agree encourages their involvement was sending letters home with the students that inform parents of course requirements, problems with behavior and/or failure and provide parents with an update regarding their child's performance in the classroom. According to the teachers' responses in the interview, this is currently being done and therefore the teachers' interview responses correspond with the parents' survey responses. In fact, one of the teachers explained "I contact parents typically once a week with progress reports but not only that, when there is a behavioral problem or if the student is failing." In addition, another teacher interviewed indicated that she sends letters home and will contact parents when a student's grades go down or if there is a behavioral problem. This teacher also contacts parents when his/her child has shown improvement.

*Calendars.* Another practice that parents believe occurred fairly often and helps to encourage parental involvement is the distribution of calendars. Based on the interview responses and a review of school documents, it appears as if the school is practicing this strategy quite well. The calendars provide information about graduation related events, open house events, sports events, etc. and they are very comprehensive. Furthermore, in the parent interviews, one of the parents specifically mentioned the school newspaper as a means for providing important information, along with the school website.

*School's newsletter.* Parents also indicated that they benefit from information about required skills and performance related issues. The school newspaper provides useful information for parents in every issue. Some of the information communicated to



parents regularly in the newsletter included website information, important contact information and PTSA information. Specialized information was also included. For example, the September, 2007 issue provided health and nutrition information (i.e. The Food Guide Pyramid) and organizational skills information (i.e. Meeting Success in all Classes). The October, 2007 issue contained information on Vegetables and college related information such as college fairs and reasons to go to college (i.e. Why go to college?). The December 2007 issue provided information about making up credits, taking the SAT/ACT and selecting a college. The February, 2008 issue provided information about meat and protein (i.e. Go Lean with Protein), intervention opportunities and academic opportunities such as testing and scholarships (i.e. Tidbits from the Counseling Office). Finally, the March, 2008 issue also provided information related to testing and academic opportunities.

*School's website.* Parents also indicated that they benefit from reviewing the school's website. According to the parents, the website typically has the most current information and is updated rather frequently. They are able to review the website to retrieve information regarding general information like accountability, staff contact information, discipline, bell schedules, cafeteria services, etc. Additionally, they can also review information regarding instructional services, school events and calendars as well as view teacher pages that offer links to receive live homework assistance. The school's website also offers a link to the PTSA's website that instructs the parents on various ways to get involved. Additionally, the school's website offers links to each teacher's individual website that contains pertinent information regarding their classes.

*School's newspaper.* The school's newspaper is generated on a monthly basis; however, they are not mailed home to parents, but rather sent home via the students. The newspaper contains specific announcements through departments, information on school events and recognition of students and staff members. Parents may benefit from this document by learning more about when tutoring is offered by department in addition to when special events like honors programs and award ceremonies will be held.

The parents' overall scores for Part II of the survey are summarized in Table 14 and indicate that parents were relatively neutral about their experiences. However, there were some parents who felt that they did not experience any of the parental involvement practices while others believed that they had experienced all of the parental involvement practices.

Table 14. Overall Parental Involvement Practices: Parent Perceptions

Source	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Parent Practices	130	1.33	5.00	3.33	0.84

Figure 12 illustrates the parents' distribution of scores with regard to overall parental involvement practices. The results in Figure 12 indicate that there was a lot of variability in the parents' scores. The distribution was negatively skewed with many of the scores falling between neutral and agree.

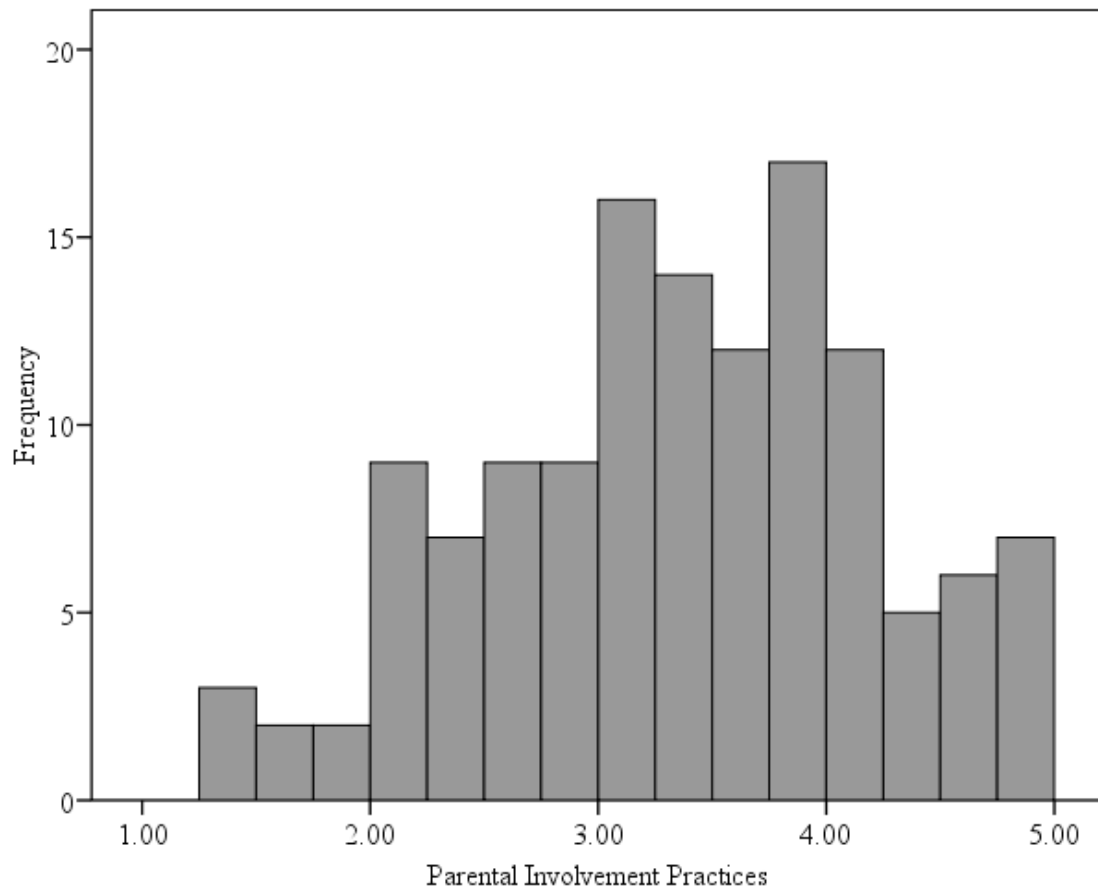


Figure 12. Parental involvement practices: Parent distribution of scores.

The results for research question 4 indicate that parents' experiences were diverse with regard to the way in which teachers applied parental involvement practices. However, on average, parents tended to agree that teachers communicated with them regularly and provided them with information regarding their child's performance in the classroom as well as course requirements. However, parents were most likely to disagree that teachers encouraged them or provided them with opportunities to volunteer in the classroom.

## Summary

Achievement High School, a very diverse school located in a suburban area of Georgia, provides an array of experiences relating to the teacher and parent perceptions of parental involvement.

The results of the study were presented based around a conceptual framework structure. The researcher used two surveys, *High School and Family Partnerships: Parent Survey* and *High School and Family Partnerships: Teacher Survey* to identify teacher and parent perceptions of parental involvement. In addition to the survey, interviews with five teachers and seven parents and document analysis were used for further clarification of results revealed in the surveys. These results were revealed in this chapter and are summarized in Table 15.

The results of this study indicate that teachers believed many barriers to parental involvement exist, especially language barriers and parent work schedules. However, parents' perceptions were very different from teachers in that they did not agree with most of the listed barriers. Although they agreed most with parent work schedules being a barrier to parental involvement, they did not agree that language barriers negatively impacted parental involvement. In addition, parents indicated that teacher or school related factors were sometimes a barrier for parental involvement such as unprofessional teachers (racism and not wanting to be questioned) and parent dissatisfaction with school policies and/or procedures.

The results of this study also indicate that parents' perceptions relative to parental involvement were positive, on average. Parents tended to agree that their involvement positively affects student attitudes, behavior and performance and that teachers are more

effective when parents are involved. They also tended to strongly agree that parents and teachers appreciate each other when they clearly understand each other's jobs.

Furthermore, parents' parental involvement perceptions tended to be more positive when they had experiences with teachers who regularly used parental involvement practices intended to encourage parental involvement.

Finally, the results of this study indicate that parents have had different experiences relative to parental involvement practices. Interestingly, the teacher interview data indicated that parents are sometimes hard to contact due to the fact that their contact information changes and they do not provide the teachers with the updated information. Perhaps some of the differences in individual experiences were due to teachers not being able to reach parents who moved, etc. In general, teachers tended to send letters home with students, inform parents of their children's problems, failures and accomplishments via progress reports and inform parents of requirements needed for successfully completing course work. Therefore teachers regularly communicated with parents and tended to encourage parental involvement by using parental involvement practices.

Table 15. Teacher and Parent Perceptions of Parental Involvement at Achievement High School

Parental Involvement	Survey Mean	Findings
Barriers: Teacher Perceptions	3.58 (0.50)	Language barriers Work schedules
Barriers: Parent Perceptions	2.01 (0.63)	Work schedules Teacher related factors School related factors
Parental Involvement: Parent Perceptions	4.11 (0.54)	Involvement positively affect student attitudes, behavior and performance Teachers are more effective when parents are involved Perceptions were mostly positive when parents had experiences with teachers who regularly used parent involvement practices
Parental Involvement Practices	3.33 (0.84)	Teachers send letters home Teachers inform parents of problems, failures and accomplishments via progress reports Teachers inform parents of requirements for success in classes

## CHAPTER 5. RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Introduction

Parental involvement and academic success have been consistently linked in all grade levels. Numerous studies in the literature review revealed that when parents are familiar with the policies and procedures in the school, there will be an increase in academic potential and a decrease in behavioral problems (Epstein & Sanders, 2002; Hill et al., 2004). Because parents are less involved at the high school level than they are at the elementary level, it was necessary to assess the perceptions of teachers and parents regarding the lack of parental involvement in a suburban high school. The study was conducted at Achievement High School which is located in a suburban area of Georgia with a population of 17, 757. The school serves a diverse population of approximately 2100 ninth through twelfth-grade students. Achievement High School (AHS) is 1 of the 17 high schools in the school district that serves ninth through twelfth-grades. The school has been open for over 20 years and still maintains a reputation of academic excellence. AHS has received numerous rewards including the recognition of the Georgia School of Excellence and School of the Year.

The case study was conducted utilizing a mixed methodology approach. The perceptions of parents and teachers were examined through the use of Epstein, Connors-Tadros, and Salinas (1993) *High School and Family Partnerships: Teacher Survey and*

*Parent Survey*. Additionally, follow-up interviews were conducted and various documents including newsletters, newspapers and websites were analyzed.

The study was based around the theoretical framework of Epstein's six types of parental involvement which includes Type 1 (parenting), Type 2 (communicating), Type 3 (volunteering), Type 4 (learning at home), Type 5 (decision-making) and Type 6 (collaborating with community). It was imperative to explore the perceptions of teachers and parents relating to parental involvement through this model because the school currently practices this model yielding little to no significant changes in parental involvement.

The findings of the study represent only the parents and teachers who participated in the study and cannot be applied to the general population of parents and teachers in the school. In conducting this study, it has been assumed that the 95 teachers and 130 parents who participated in this study gave honest and accurate responses to the survey questions in addition to the twelve respondents who participated in the interviews and open-ended responses.

This chapter will present the findings of the case study from Achievement High School. The discussion of results will be provided first, followed by the conclusions. Finally, the recommendations for future research and implications in the area of parental involvement will be discussed.

### Summary and Discussion of the Results

The purpose of this study was to assess the perceptions of teachers and parents regarding the lack of parental involvement in a suburban high school. This mixed



methodology case study used two modified surveys that were designed to produce a synopsis of school and family partnerships as perceived by teachers and parents (Epstein et al., 1993) , open-ended interview questions and documents to develop a narrative of a descriptive and thematic analysis of the findings. Mixed methods research were used to gain in depth information to answer the research questions; thus, it is believed that utilizing both is the “most effective mode of reaching truth” (Newman & Benz, 1998, p. 10). While the quantitative data of this research provided a more limited view of parental involvement in the high school, the qualitative data led to further explanations and clarifications of the perceptions, barriers and practices of parental involvement that will contribute to recommendations for future research. Some of the results of the study will directly correlate with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 while others will present differences from the literature reviewed in the chapter.

Much of the literature in Chapter 2 dealt with parents allowing their children more autonomy at the high school level (Lerner & Galambos, 1998; Stevenson & Baker, 1987; Zill & Nord, 1994). The results of the study supported that notion since many of the parents believed that their children were fairly responsible and capable of making some of their own decisions. Additionally, some of the literature revealed that parental involvement is most effective when it is consistent (Henderson, 1987). Some of the parents were able to confirm that they have been actively involved since their child’s early years in school resulting in the child performing exceptionally well in academics. Additional literature will be discussed as it relates to the results reviewed through each research question.

This study utilized four research questions to examine the perceptions, barriers and practices of teachers and parents as it related to parental involvement. A discussion of the findings of each are listed below based on analysis of the data.

#### *Research Question 1*

What are the perceived barriers, if any, that teachers identify regarding the lack of parental involvement?

After analyzing the data, the results confirmed the researcher's original thoughts in which the teachers tend to agree that there are existing barriers regarding the lack of parental involvement. The results of the survey indicated that the teachers tended to agree more with the following barriers: (a) Parents don't know how to talk to their teen, (b) parents are too involved with their own work, (c) parent don't know school policies and procedures, (d) language barriers, (e) lack of transportation, (f) parent work schedules and (g) lack of childcare options. According to the teachers, these barriers negatively affected parental involvement. Thus, their beliefs directly correlate with some of the literature previously reviewed such as the findings of Lawson (2003), in that teachers are likely to place blame on the parents while the parents have a different view of barriers. On the other hand, teachers disagreed that parents do not feel welcomed in the school. There were no significant differences in the teacher group across the four grade levels. The findings from the survey are supported by the open-ended responses from the teacher interviews:

It is extremely difficult to communicate with some of the parents because they do not speak English and I do not speak their language.

Often, I have tried to contact parents to request conferences and many of them explain that it will be extremely difficult to meet because of their extended work hours.

I contacted a parent who had no idea regarding when progress reports were distributed. She expressed that she thought that progress reports were only given in elementary school and that she was under the impression that report cards were distributed once per year in high school.

The two most common barriers that the teachers cited were language barriers and work schedules. Therefore, the results of the findings in the literature are very similar to that of Lontos (1991) in that language barriers and work demands contribute to the lack of parental involvement. The findings involving the barriers appear to be rather common and consistent with those found in similar studies. Based on the results of the survey and the interviews, it appears that all of the teachers had similar conclusions as to why parents are not more involved in their child's education.

Many of the teachers expressed language barriers as one of the pitfalls to parental involvement even though none of the parents agreed that this is such a barrier. This may be the case either because all of the parents who returned surveys were able to speak English or surveys were sent to those who were not able to speak English and were therefore not returned for that very reason.

Some of the teachers who have children of their own were empathetic and could relate to some of the barriers especially that of time constraints; yet, because they are thoroughly aware of the importance of the academic success of children, they believed that the parents are simply not willing to place education at the top of their list of priorities. It is evident that the school is trying to schedule more conducive hours for open night, open house, PTSA and other events so that more parents are able to attend. It is

notable that the school has a very active PTSA and allows parents to participate on other school committees. Through the commitment of maintaining an active PTSA and other committees, the school is practicing Epstein's type 5, decision-making model by attempting to get parents more involved in these activities. As previously reviewed in the literature, parents are more involved with structured and organized programs (Simon, 2004). One practice that the school does to require commitment is to schedule an open house on the day of a PTSA meeting. Normally, the meeting begins around 7:00 and lasts for about fifteen minutes. Thereafter, the parents are asked to pay their dues and to pick up their child's class schedule so they may proceed to the classrooms to meet the teachers. Many parents are definitely interested in putting names with faces and receiving policies and procedures of each class. Therefore, parents are more likely to attend for this reason. Additionally, teachers are able to ensure that they have current contact information for the parents when they require parent information sheets at the time of sign-in. The open house is very organized in that the parents follow the schedules in consecutive order of the classes. Each class period is only 10 minutes, thus limiting questions regarding individual students' grades and behavior. Moreover, the teacher has just enough time to introduce him or herself and review the policies and procedures of his or her class during the ten minute period. Even though meetings such as these are very advantageous for the school, parents, teachers and students, it is definitely notable that it is the norm for teachers to see less than 10% of their students' parents. In this scenario, one must question if the parents have mentioned time and work schedules as barriers to parental involvement, whether it will truly make a difference if such meetings are held much later or on the weekends.

### *Research Question 2*

What are the perceived barriers, if any, that parents identify regarding the lack of parental involvement?

The findings of this study were very different from what was expected as well as different from some of the information previously reviewed in the literature. An analysis of the data showed that the parents tended to disagree more with the following barriers: (a) Parents don't know how to talk to their teen, (b) parents don't feel welcomed at the school, (c) parent don't know school policies and procedures, (d) language barriers, (e) lack of transportation, (f) lack of childcare options and (g) parents are too involved with their own work. However, they agreed that work schedules may limit parental involvement. The findings from the survey were supported by the findings in the open-ended responses from some of the parents:

My office hours and travel schedule have shown themselves to be an obstacle in being involved at my child's school; however, I have been able to successfully work around it thus far.

My crazy work schedule has definitely been a downfall in my becoming more actively involved in my child's school. I normally work a twelve hour shift five days per week. Because of this, I am only able to communicate with teachers through email. I am never able to attend parent-teacher conferences because I can't get off from work.

Some of the findings indicated in this study were equally similar as well as different from the findings in the literature. The findings of Lontos (1991) of cultural and language barriers and emotional or economic difficulties do not appear to be barriers for the parents who participated in the study. On the other hand, some of the parents agreed that their negative experiences with school personnel or disagreement with school

policies and procedures as well as work schedules are barriers to their involvement (1991):

Again, my dissatisfaction with the school has resulted in me pulling away some. There are some school policies that I do not agree with, so I have chosen to be more distant the last few years.

The inconsistency of the beliefs of teachers and parents may be due to the parents' belief that the barriers listed on the survey do not directly apply to them or the parents are not willing to reveal the actual barriers that may be more applicable to their situation.

Additionally, the teachers are in direct contact with a diverse group of parents and the barriers may be directly applicable to some of the parents who were not involved in the study.

The results of the findings were also consistent with the findings in the document analysis in addition to the findings in the literature. The parents are thoroughly aware of the policies and procedures in the school. Thus, this confirms the literature in which stated that parents want to be better informed (Epstein, 2007). They receive quarterly newsletters and the school's website is consistently updated. Additionally, each teacher has an individual website that gives detailed information regarding current policies and procedures.

As previously stated, it is evident that the school has a very thorough system in place to get more parents involved by scheduling late hours that are more conducive to parent work schedules; yet, parental involvement has not increased. Therefore, one must question if parents are using the most clichéd excuse possible so they will not be held to such high expectations. This may be one reason why some teachers appear to be less

empathetic with parents and their work schedules simply because they feel that parents are not taking full responsibility as parents. It is also notable that some teachers mentioned that the parents who reside in this school's district are probably overwhelmed with working more than one job so they may continue to afford the luxurious homes that are popular in the area. Of course, this is pure speculation; however, it was mentioned by several of the teachers in the interviews. Additionally, many of the teachers believed that the parents are able to purchase trendy items for their kids to keep them satisfied in order to replace the time that they are not able to spend with them. Thus, such speculative remarks may confirm the notion that education may not be at the forefront of the parents' priority list.

Based on the literature of Epstein's type 1 model of parenting, it does appear that the school offers resources through its website, newsletters and newspapers to assist the parents in establishing a home environment that is supportive of their children as students; yet, many of the parents seem to think that they are doing a fine job and therefore, do not take advantage of such opportunities. Additionally, the school practices Epstein's type 4 model of learning at home. The school has purchased a license with the company *Homework Now* in which all of the teachers are able to set up a website and post information pertaining to their classes. The parents are able to utilize this source to retrieve information regarding instructional calendars, homework, tests, announcements, etc. The parents are also able to send email messages directly to the teachers through this website. This resource appears to be highly favored by the teachers and the parents; yet, many parents are still unaware that it exists. Perhaps this may be due to parents not reading or receiving the information that they receive in the mail from the school or there

is a communication barrier between the parents and their child's teachers. Also, parents may not regularly visit the school's website to review updated information.

### *Research Question 3*

What are the perceptions of parents who actively participate in their child's educational studies and school as compared to parents who do not actively participate in their child's educational studies and school?

There were no surprises in the findings as the results were revealed. An analysis of the findings indicated that the overall parents' perceptions were positive. Parents agreed more than disagreed that their involvement increased student attitudes and performance and made teachers more effective. The findings of this study were consistent with that of the literature of Epstein and Sanders (2002) which stated that parental involvement and student achievement are directly linked. Additionally, the findings were similar to that of Hornby (2000) in which parents have specific needs that they believe that teachers should meet like regularly communicating, displaying a more approachable attitude, effectively discussing student progress at conferences and regularly sending home detailed reports of the child's progress. The results indicated that parents who actively participate in their child's educational studies as compared to the parents who do not actively participate had very similar perceptions on the importance of parental involvement. Thus, it can be concluded that the parents are aware of the importance of parental involvement, but may not become more involved for various reasons as indicated in some of the parent interviews:

I am aware of the importance of parental involvement; however, I just do not have time to be as involved as I would like to be.



My son is willing to work harder when he knows that I consistently communicate with all of his teachers. This is why I make time to stay in constant contact with all of his teachers. He knows that I expect more and that I will not accept anything less. The teachers work harder as well because they know that I am an active parent.

I think parental involvement is key in helping kids be successful in school. When kids know that their parents are involved in what goes on in their school and when kids know that their parents are in constant contact with their teacher, they work harder. I used to be very actively involved in my daughter's school, but my dissatisfaction with the school has resulted in me pulling away some.

The three factors that were most common amongst all of the parents in the surveys and the interviews and consistent with the findings in the literature were (a) parents want to know more, (b) most teachers want parents more involved and (c) parents and teachers appreciate each other (Epstein, 2007). All of the parents expressed their knowledge of the importance of parental involvement. Thus, there is a direct contrast in Anderson and Minke's (2007) belief that parents have a community-centric view that they are only responsible for getting their children to school and providing them with a safe environment. As previously stated, it is difficult to believe that parents are knowledgeable of the importance of parental involvement; yet, some still create reasons why their involvement is severely limited.

The school practices Epstein's type 2 and 3 models of communicating and volunteering. As revealed in both teacher and parent interviews, both parties are thoroughly aware of the importance of communication and both make an effort to actively practice this concept via emails, phone calls, letters, etc. Moreover, the results of the study contrast with the literature of Epstein's (2007) notion that parents believe that teachers only contact parents when they experience behavioral problems with the

students. This was extremely evident in the interviews with both teachers and parents. Additionally, the school regularly updates the website and sends newsletters home on a quarterly basis. Also, other letters are sent home as well throughout the entire year to inform parents of information that may be pertinent to a specified group of students.

Even though volunteering is not a major role in the high school setting, it is still highly encouraged by the school officials as well as PTSA. There are a variety of opportunities in which parents may volunteer at the school especially during the school day as well as after-school events and activities. The PTSA is especially known at the school for providing meals for teachers on special occasions such as teacher appreciation week in addition to providing meals for students like football players on a weekly basis prior to each game. These are just a couple of examples in which parents may take the opportunity to volunteer. According to the data found in the surveys and interviews, many parents feel that teachers do not want them to volunteer in their classrooms at the high school level. While this premise may be true as noted on the teacher surveys, there are other ways of volunteering in the school as made evident above. Again, this leads one to question whether parents are more concerned with how they will be perceived by their child if they choose to volunteer in the school or whether they are willing to take the time to volunteer. This further confirms the theory of Lerner and Galambos (1998) that parents allow their children more autonomy at the high school level. Thus, it is ultimately the parents' decision as to whether or not they would like to volunteer; however, they seem to be more concerned with the perception of their children. Also, as noted in the teacher interviews, the teachers really do not expect parents to volunteer in the school especially

since they can not find the time to meet with their child's teachers during activities such as open house and conferences.

#### *Research Question 4*

What are the school factors that parents identify that may encourage parental involvement?

The findings revealed were rather consistent with that stated in the literature. An analysis of the findings revealed diversity amongst the experiences of parents to the way in which teachers applied parental involvement practices. On average, the parents agreed that their involvement is encouraged by more communications from the school such as frequent contact from the teachers through letters, phone calls, emails and calendars (Epstein, 2007). Additionally, parents most likely disagreed that teachers encouraged them or provided them with opportunities to volunteer in the classroom even though there are other opportunities to volunteer as noted in the previous section.

The findings in this study directly correlate with the literature of Epstein's second type of parental involvement of communication which states that the school is responsible for creating a two-way communication system (2004). The practice of communication is consistently encouraged at the school as stated in the previous section. Therefore, the school should continue to employ such methods of communication. However, the school invites parents to volunteer as noted in the previous section, but the teachers are not open to allowing parents to enter and volunteer in their classrooms mainly because of confidentiality concerns.

In the parent interviews, the parents were asked to identify additional factors that the school should employ to increase parental involvement. Some of the responses were as follows:

I think the school has done what it can. I think it's up to the parents and how they prioritize their child's education.

That is a real tough one because again at the high school level, parents tend to think their students are grown so they think they don't have to or feel as though they don't have to volunteer like they did in elementary or middle school and as a parent, I think it is even more important that we support and come in and volunteer our time so our students can see us in the school. That is how I get to know a lot of kids that are there because I meet them and I go up and talk to them and I really don't know if there is anything more the school can do. I think it is more our part as parents that we need to do in order to support what the school is trying to teach our students.

Based on the responses in the surveys and the interviews, it is evident that the school has done and continues to go the extra mile to encourage parents to become more actively involved. It appears that at this point, it is truly up to the parents to make a conscious effort to increase their involvement. With the various forms of communication that the school employs, one must question as to whether an increase of communication will really make a difference in parental involvement as concluded from the surveys and interviews. Additionally, numerous opportunities are available for parents to volunteer; yet, there has been no increase in involvement. Some of the teachers revealed in their interviews that the same group of parents volunteers around the school. Additionally, these are also the same parents who are responsible for venturing into the community to increase community partners for the school. This premise confirmed that the school practices Epstein's type 6 model of collaborating with the community. The teachers,

administrators and few parent volunteers are responsible for the integration of agencies and school programs.

On the other hand, it appears that parents have become more complacent and allow their children more autonomy at the high school level. It appears that the focus of education is more concentrated at the elementary and middle school level. Parents must realize that even though the children are older in high school, they are still not mentally prepared to handle the necessary responsibilities of young adults. Thus, they are still in need of parental guidance. Teachers have also become complacent because they feel that there is nothing more that the school can do to encourage parents to become more involved at this level.

### Conclusions

This study supports the major conclusions pertaining to the perceptions of parental involvement as outlined below.

1. According to the teachers, there are numerous variables that pertain to parents not being actively involved in their child's education; however, the two most significant are time constraints and language barriers. With this in mind, the school should continue to practice late hour open house and PTSA meetings in addition to developing late hour parent-teacher conferences to accommodate the parents. Additionally, the school should consider employing bilingual personnel who can serve as liaison between the parents and teachers to accommodate the non-English speaking parents. It is notable that not all of the potential variables were listed on the survey or revealed in the interviews. Each of the teachers and parents interviewed discussed barriers to parental involvement, but some of the barriers were not applicable to all of the parents.
2. According to the parents, the most significant barrier to parental involvement is time constraints. Again, the school should consider employing late hour parent-teacher conferences to accommodate the parents. Perhaps, this will make a difference in the number of parents who attend such events.

3. Parental involvement can be concluded as a determining factor in student attitudes, behavior and performance. Each parent in this study has taken the necessary steps to improve their involvement with their child's education and the school. As revealed in the parent and teacher interviews, communication is one factor that positively contributes to parental involvement and student achievement. The school should continue to encourage teachers to actively communicate with the parents and develop creative ways to encourage parents to actively communicate with the teachers. The first step is to implement a website or some type of database in which parents can provide updated contact information.
4. Parental involvement can be concluded as a determining factor in the effectiveness of teachers. Each teacher in this study has increased communication with parents to further encourage parental involvement, but has not invited the parents in their classrooms. This is understandable in many instances especially with confidentiality concerns. Perhaps, the school and the teachers can provide parents with information on other opportunities to volunteer at the school.
5. As revealed in the parent interviews, the school has done all that it can to encourage parents to become more involved. Perhaps, the school should consider utilizing its community partners to provide incentives for parents who become involved with the school.
6. Parents must eliminate their complacent attitudes and realize that their children are still in need of parental guidance.

### Recommendations

The following information is provided for recommendations for future research for parental involvement based on the results of this study.

#### *Recommendations for Future Research*

1. This research study was conducted at a suburban high school which represented only a small sample of parents and teachers. It is recommended that future researchers obtain a larger sample by conducting the research at multiple high schools. Additionally, it is recommended that researchers conduct the study at multiple sites across various cities, states and regions to determine if there are differences in the perceptions of those located in different areas.

2. This study was conducted during the spring and summer of the 2007-2008 school year; therefore, it is recommended that the research be conducted over the next few years at the same school to determine if perceptions change as students transition to the next grade level.
3. This research assessed the perceptions of parents and teachers. Future research should include additional stakeholders such as students, counselors and administrators to determine if they hold similar perceptions of parental involvement.
4. This researched assessed the perceptions of parents and teachers at the high school level. Future research should be conducted at the elementary schools and middle school in the same cluster to determine if there are differences in the perceptions of parents and teachers at the different school levels.
5. The researcher was employed at the school when the research was conducted. Thus, a similar study should be conducted at the same school by a different researcher who is not directly affiliated with the school to determine if there will be any differences in the perceptions of the parents and teachers.

#### *Recommendations for Practice*

1. The school currently has extended hours for open house; however, it should consider having extended hours for parent/teacher conferences to accommodate the parents who either work late hours or who work far away from the school.
2. The school should consider creating a more inviting atmosphere for the parents during after school events such as the open house or parent/teacher conferences.
3. Parental improvement alone will not increase student achievement, but it will significantly impact it when schools and parents work together collaboratively (Epstein, 2007). Therefore, the school should consider creating a community involvement effort where all stakeholders can work together by volunteering which provides an opportunity for additional collaboration amongst all stakeholders.
4. The administrators should consider directly involving parents and teachers in the decision-making process not just through PTSA. This can be accomplished by allowing representatives of each group to join the School Leadership Team (SLT). Thereafter, the team should conduct additional research and visit other schools to determine the best practices of parental involvement in addition to continuing the use of Epstein's six types of involvement (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home,

decision making and collaborating with the community) as a guide for improving parental involvement.

5. Ongoing professional development should be encouraged for teachers to utilize effective means of communicating with parents.
6. The school should consider providing parental workshops that will provide parents with information on human development so they may better understand how their children are mentally developing and realize that parental guidance is still needed.

### Implications

This study examined the perceptions of parents and teachers as it relates to parental involvement in a high school to determine if there were differences in the beliefs of barriers, perceptions regarding the impact of parental involvement on student performance and the role of parents in education, and parents' perceptions regarding school and teacher related practices that encourage parent involvement. Research has consistently revealed that students perform better academically and behaviorally when their parents are directly involved in their education (Epstein & Sanders, 2002) and this premise holds true especially during the middle and high school years (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). Based on the results of this study, this was consistent and found to be true based on the perspectives of both parents and teachers. However, the inconsistency in the beliefs of parents and teachers as it relates to the barriers of parental involvement may be due to the following factors: (a) The barriers that were listed on the survey do not apply directly to those parents who were surveyed and/or interviewed or (b) the parents are not willing to reveal the actual barriers that may prohibit them from becoming more involved. Additionally, it was concluded that teachers are more effective when parents



are involved. Thus, teachers regularly communicated with parents to encourage parental involvement.

Therefore, school leaders should continue to consistently encourage all teachers to regularly communicate with parents. Additionally, school leaders should provide more opportunities for parents to participate in workshops that will provide them with information on effective communication, parenting, time management, and effective decision-making skills. This will contribute to a greater understanding of barriers and assist parents in identifying and alleviating barriers to improve their level of parental involvement as their children continue to progress through high school.

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## APPENDIX A. HIGH SCHOOL AND FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

### PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Part I: Parental Involvement Perceptions

Listed below are some statements regarding perceptions of parental involvement in high school. Please read each statement, and **CIRCLE** one choice for each item that best represents your opinion and experience.

#### **PARENT'S PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN HIGH SCHOOLS**

The following are the descriptions of responses:

**SA** = **Strongly Agree**  
**A** = **Agree**  
**N** = **Neutral**  
**D** = **Disagree**  
**SD** = **Strongly Disagree**

1. Most students display more positive attitudes when their parents are involved in the school.	SA	A	N	D	SD
2. Most teachers are more effective when parents are involved in their child's education.	SA	A	N	D	SD
3. Most students perform better in daily activities and standardized assessments when their parents are more involved in the school.	SA	A	N	D	SD
4. Most teachers prefer that parents volunteer more in their classrooms.	SA	A	N	D	SD
5. Most teachers are better able to teach if parents are willing to do some of the non-teaching jobs.	SA	A	N	D	SD

6. This school views parents as important partners.	SA	A	N	D	SD
7. Most parents want to know more about the daily activities in the school and the classroom.	SA	A	N	D	SD
8. Most teachers want parents to be more involved in their child's educational activities.	SA	A	N	D	SD
9. Both parents and teachers appreciate each other when they clearly understand each other's jobs.	SA	A	N	D	SD

## Part II: Parental Involvement Practices

Listed below are some ways that teachers can be more involved with high school parents. Please read each statement, and **CIRCLE** one choice for each item that best represents your opinion and experience.

<p><b><u>PARENT'S PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT PRACTICES IN HIGH SCHOOLS</u></b></p> <p><b>The following are the descriptions of responses:</b></p> <p><b>SA = Strongly Agree</b>  <b>A = Agree</b>  <b>N = Neutral</b>  <b>D = Disagree</b>  <b>SD = Strongly Disagree</b></p>					
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1. My child's teacher sends a letter of introduction home and provides time for me to meet him/her.	SA	A	N	D	SD
2. My child's teacher provides a calendar that outlines all major assignments and consistently	SA	A	N	D	SD

communicates with me regarding the assignments.					
3. My child's teacher contacts me when my child experiences problems or failures.	SA	A	N	D	SD
4. My child's teacher informs me when my child does something well or improves.	SA	A	N	D	SD
5. My child's teacher encourages me to volunteer in his/her classroom.	SA	A	N	D	SD
6. My child's teacher provides me with ideas to help me talk with my child about what they learn in his/her class.	SA	A	N	D	SD
7. My child's teacher provides me with the information regarding the necessary skills that are required to pass his/her class.	SA	A	N	D	SD
8. My child's teacher assigns homework that requires my child to talk with someone at home.	SA	A	N	D	SD
9. My child's teacher allows me to assist in developing a behavior and/or learning contract that will assist my child in progressing.	SA	A	N	D	SD

### **Part III: Parental Involvement Barriers**

Listed below are some statements that some parents have made to teachers about possible obstacles or barriers with parental involvement in their high school. Please read each statement, and **CIRCLE** one choice for each item that best represents your opinion and experience.

#### **PARENT'S PERCEPTIONS OF BARRIERS WITH PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN HIGH SCHOOLS**

**The following are the descriptions of responses:**

<b>SA</b>	=	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>A</b>	=	<b>Agree</b>
<b>N</b>	=	<b>Neutral</b>
<b>D</b>	=	<b>Disagree</b>
<b>SD</b>	=	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>

1. I do not know how to talk with my child about schoolwork.	SA	A	N	D	SD
2. I am not able to become involved at my child's school because of work demands.	SA	A	N	D	SD
3. I am unfamiliar with school policies and procedures.	SA	A	N	D	SD
4. English is not my primary language and this makes it more difficult for me to communicate and get involved.	SA	A	N	D	SD
5. Lack of transportation to the school reduces my involvement.	SA	A	N	D	SD
6. I do not feel welcomed when I enter the school building.	SA	A	N	D	SD
7. My work hours are not conducive to the school hours that teachers are available.	SA	A	N	D	SD
8. I do not have available child care for my other children which prohibit me from being involved.	SA	A	N	D	SD

### RESPONDENT INFORMATION

1. Age\_\_\_\_\_

2. Gender: Male\_\_\_\_\_ Female\_\_\_\_\_ Race\_\_\_\_\_

3. Highest academic qualifications:

Did not Graduate High School\_\_\_\_\_ High School Diploma/GED\_\_\_\_\_

Bachelor's\_\_\_\_\_ Master's\_\_\_\_\_ Doctorate\_\_\_\_\_

Certificate (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

4. Occupation\_\_\_\_\_

5. Total Number of Children\_\_\_\_\_

6. Number of children at this school\_\_\_\_\_

7. Grade level of oldest child at this school\_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.*



APPENDIX B. HIGH SCHOOL AND FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS  
TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

**Part I: Parental Involvement Perceptions**

Listed below are some statements regarding perceptions of parental involvement in high school. Please read each statement, and **CIRCLE** one choice for each item that best represents your opinion and experience.

**TEACHER'S PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN HIGH SCHOOLS**

The following are the descriptions of responses:

**SA** = **Strongly Agree**  
**A** = **Agree**  
**N** = **Neutral**  
**D** = **Disagree**  
**SD** = **Strongly Disagree**

1. Most students display more positive attitudes when their parents are involved in the school.	SA	A	N	D	SD
2. Most teachers are more effective when parents are involved in their child's education.	SA	A	N	D	SD
3. Most students perform better in daily activities and standardized assessments when their parents are more involved in the school.	SA	A	N	D	SD
4. Most teachers prefer that parents volunteer more in their classrooms.	SA	A	N	D	SD
5. Most teachers are better able to teach if parents are willing to do some of the non-teaching jobs.	SA	A	N	D	SD

6. This school views parents as important partners.	SA	A	N	D	SD
7. Most parents want to know more about the daily activities in the school and the classroom.	SA	A	N	D	SD
8. Most teachers want parents to be more involved in their child's educational activities.	SA	A	N	D	SD
9. Both parents and teachers appreciate each other when they clearly understand each other's jobs.	SA	A	N	D	SD

## Part II: Parental Involvement Practices

Listed below are some ways that teachers can be more involved with high school parents. Please read each statement, and **CIRCLE** one choice for each item that best represents your opinion and experience.

<p><b><u>TEACHER'S PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT PRACTICES IN HIGH SCHOOLS</u></b></p> <p>The following are the descriptions of responses:</p> <p><b>SA = Strongly Agree</b>  <b>A = Agree</b>  <b>N = Neutral</b>  <b>D = Disagree</b>  <b>SD = Strongly Disagree</b></p>					
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1. Send a letter home with each of your students to introduce yourself and give parents time to meet you.	SA	A	N	D	SD
2. Provide parents with a calendar that outlines all major assignments and consistently communicate with them	SA	A	N	D	SD

regarding the assignments.					
3. Contact parents when their teen has problems or failures.	SA	A	N	D	SD
4. Inform parents when their teen does something well or improves.	SA	A	N	D	SD
5. Involve parents as volunteers in my classroom.	SA	A	N	D	SD
6. Provide ideas to help parents talk with their teen about what they learn in my class.	SA	A	N	D	SD
7. Inform parents of the skills required to pass my class.	SA	A	N	D	SD
8. Assign homework that requires students to talk with someone at home.	SA	A	N	D	SD
9. Develop behavior and/or learning contracts for students in collaboration with parents.	SA	A	N	D	SD

### Part III: Parental Involvement Barriers

Listed below are some statements that teachers have made as potential obstacles or barriers with parental involvement in their high school. Please read each statement, and CIRCLE one choice for each item that best represents your opinion and experience.

#### **TEACHER'S PERCEPTIONS OF BARRIERS WITH PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN HIGH SCHOOLS**

The following are the descriptions of responses:

SA = Strongly Agree  
A = Agree  
N = Neutral  
D = Disagree  
SD = Strongly Disagree

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1. Most parents do not know how to talk with their teens about schoolwork at home.	SA	A	N	D	SD
2. Most parents are too involved with their own work to participate in their children's education.	SA	A	N	D	SD
3. Most parents are unfamiliar with school policies and procedures.	SA	A	N	D	SD
4. Some parents do not speak English as their primary language and this makes it more difficult for them to communicate and get involved.	SA	A	N	D	SD
5. Some parents have a lack of transportation to the school which reduces parental involvement.	SA	A	N	D	SD
6. Most parents do not feel welcomed when they enter the school building.	SA	A	N	D	SD
7. Parents work hours that are not conducive to the school hours that teachers are available.	SA	A	N	D	SD
8. Parents do not have available child care for other children which reduce their level of parental involvement.	SA	A	N	D	SD

### **RESPONDENT INFORMATION**

1. Age\_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender: Male\_\_\_\_\_ Female\_\_\_\_\_ Race\_\_\_\_\_
3. Highest academic qualifications:  
Bachelor's\_\_\_\_\_ Master's\_\_\_\_\_ Specialist\_\_\_\_\_ Doctorate\_\_\_\_\_
4. Years of teaching/educational experience\_\_\_\_\_
5. Grade taught\_\_\_\_\_ (please identify the grade that is the majority of your teaching load)
6. Position at school\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C. TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

All questions are related to your experiences with parental involvement at this particular school.

1. How do you view parental involvement as it relates to student achievement?
2. What procedures do you employ to actively communicate with parents?
3. When do you normally contact parents and why?
4. Describe your experiences with communicating with parents.
5. Describe some of the potential barriers that may exist that prohibits you from communicating with parents.
6. What procedures do you utilize to encourage parents to become more involved in their child's education?
7. What are the current school factors that are in place to encourage parental involvement?
8. What additional factors should the school employ to encourage parents to become more involved?

### Respondent Information

1. Age\_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender: Male\_\_\_\_\_ Female\_\_\_\_\_ Race\_\_\_\_\_
3. Highest academic qualifications:  
Bachelor's\_\_\_\_\_ Master's\_\_\_\_\_ Specialist\_\_\_\_\_ Doctorate\_\_\_\_\_
4. Years of teaching/educational experience\_\_\_\_\_
5. Grade taught\_\_\_\_\_ (please identify the grade that is the majority of your teaching load)
6. Position at school\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D. PARENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

All questions are related to your experiences with parental involvement at this particular school.

1. How do you view parental involvement as it relates to student achievement?
2. What procedures do you employ to actively communicate with teachers?
3. When do you normally contact teachers and why?
4. Describe your experiences with communicating with teachers.
5. Describe some of the potential barriers that may exist that prohibits you from communicating with teachers.
6. Describe your level of involvement with the school. (not actively involved, somewhat involved, moderately involved, very actively involved)
7. Describe some of the potential barriers that may exist that prohibits you from becoming actively involved in your child's school.
8. What procedures do you utilize to become more involved in your child's education?
9. What are the current school factors that are in place to encourage parental involvement?
10. What additional factors should the school employ to encourage parents to become more involved?

### Respondent Information

1. Age\_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender: Male\_\_\_\_\_ Female\_\_\_\_\_ Race\_\_\_\_\_
3. Highest academic qualifications:  
Did not Graduate High School\_\_\_\_\_ High School Diploma/GED\_\_\_\_\_  
Bachelor's\_\_\_\_\_ Master's\_\_\_\_\_ Doctorate\_\_\_\_\_

Certificate (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

4. Occupation\_\_\_\_\_

5. Total Number of Children\_\_\_\_\_

6. Number of children at this school\_\_\_\_\_

7. Grade level of oldest child at this school\_\_\_\_\_



